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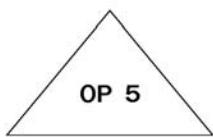
In Search of an Elusive Enemy: The Victorio Campaign

Kendall D. Gott



Combat Studies Institute Press
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Foreword

In Search of an Elusive Enemy: The Victorio Campaign, 1879-1880 represents another in a series of military case studies published by the Combat Studies Institute (CSI) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This work examines the US Army's efforts in tracking down Victorio, the infamous Apache chief who raided large tracts of New Mexico and Texas at will, terrorizing the entire region. The key point made in this work is that it demonstrates the challenges of tracking and capturing or killing a small, irregular group of warriors in inhospitable terrain and among an alien culture.

Although set in the late 19th century, this case study is still extremely relevant for today's Army. The commanders of the 9th and 10th US Cavalry Regiments faced a skilled adversary who used unconventional tactics and methods as well as an international border to seek sanctuary. However, it could just as easily have featured the stories of Osceola, Aguinaldo, Pancho Villa, or Osama bin Laden. The similarities to challenges that US and coalition forces face in Afghanistan and Iraq are striking. The commanders of the 19th century faced enormous challenges in the rugged terrain of the American Southwest as well as a skeptical and often hostile press. Again, officers and soldiers who have recently served in Afghanistan and Iraq will certainly see parallels here.

As the US Army continues its efforts in combating terrorists where they live, the lessons found in this narrative are well worth revisiting.

THOMAS T. SMITH
LTC, IN
Director, Combat Studies

Preface

This work represents my first publication since joining the esteemed ranks of CSI. I give many thanks to those who gave me this opportunity. The goal of this and other special studies CSI has published is to provide historical examples of battles, campaigns, and historical figures from which leaders of today's Army can draw lessons and inspiration. Although the Victorio Campaign occurred more than a century ago, the tale still yields relevant points for the modern battlefield. The lessons here are not in using black powder weapons or Napoleonic tactics but in finding the key weakness in your enemy and adapting tactics and methods to exploit it. This work does not simply prescribe solutions but helps burnish the intellectual tools with which to diagnose the unexpected and create solutions using the hard-won experience of successful commanders of the past. The story of the Victorio Campaign does this and demonstrates that even under the most arduous of circumstances the American soldier will persevere until victory is won.

I would also like to extend thanks and appreciation to the staff of the Fort Davis Historic Site (National Park Service), Fort Davis, Texas, for the contemporary newspapers and materials used in this work, most notably a copy of Robert Grierson's journal. Many thanks also to Don Stivers who graciously gave permission to use his painting, *Tracking Victorio*, for the cover.

Kendall D. Gott

The US Army has often been called upon to conduct operations in inhospitable climates on rugged terrain against elusive and determined foes. Some of the more famous of these characters were Emilio Aguinaldo of the Philippines, Pancho Villa of Mexico, and in recent times Muslim terrorist Osama bin Laden. Each of these men faced the superior weaponry and materiel of the US Army but put up a persistent struggle nonetheless. All of these operations were costly in manpower, were bitterly frustrating, and took months of hard campaigning. The areas of operation were in foreign lands and often featured a porous border or areas of sanctuary for the enemy to receive logistics support and recruits. The Army also faced extreme public scrutiny and at times a hostile press.

The Victorio Campaign bears many parallels to ongoing operations against Islamic terrorist movements. Victorio was a charismatic leader who many indeed considered a terrorist. On the other hand, his followers considered him a freedom fighter and gave him their unswerving loyalty. These warriors were fanatical in their support and willingly endured extreme hardship and depredation in the fight against their enemies. Victorio's band was not self-sustaining and received replenishment from fellow Apaches that remained on the reservations when operating nearby. When ranging over the mountains the band relied on its defeated enemies' captured arms, ammunition, and horses. Like today's terrorist leaders, Victorio used an international border, that between the United States and Mexico, to great effect. He knew that both countries were unable to coordinate their efforts through the stifling bureaucracy and political rivalry that so often poisoned amicable relations. As a result, Victorio was able to raid into one country and avoid pursuit by simply recrossing the border.

Victorio's opponents faced many of the challenges that are seen in current theaters of operation such as Afghanistan or Iraq. The officers and men of the US Cavalry were called on to pursue and destroy an enemy who had made the nearly barren mountains and harsh climate his home. The troopers were better armed and trained than their adversary but had great difficulty in bringing their firepower to bear against the agile and elusive Apache. There was also a cynical and often hostile press reporting on the progress, or lack thereof, against the raiders. The soldiers were a long way from home, and supplying them with food, forage, and ammunition was a constant endeavor across the vast tracts of the frontier. Finally, the US Army was restrained in pursuing Victorio across the international border into Mexico, resulting in a number of missed opportunities to decisively eliminate the threat of Apache raids.

Although the Victorio Campaign was fought more than 100 years ago,

it still presents lessons and insights for the modern commander. It is a story that illustrates the importance of understanding one's enemy and the capabilities and limitations of one's own troops. The campaign also shows the American soldier can adapt to harsh conditions and win against an elusive and deadly enemy, in this case the Apache.

The Mimbres Apache

Americans initiated a massive migration to the Western plains in the years following the Civil War, and the clash between the settlers and the native peoples was inevitable. The displacement of the indigenous tribes caused deep resentment and hostility. Armed clashes were frequent. The Army strove to separate the new settlers from the native peoples and enforce the peace by moving the tribes to reservations and keeping the settlers from encroaching on them. From the onset, the Army was over-extended across the vast distances of the frontier, facing enormous challenges in logistics and communications.

Although most tribes peacefully confined themselves to the reservations, bands of warriors often left these tracts attempting to return to their traditional lands and old ways of life or, in some cases, simply to raid and pillage. The years 1879 and 1880 were particularly tense in the southwestern United States as various bands simultaneously sallied out of their reservations to return to their old nomadic lifestyle. Although it was the Apaches in the Southwest and the White River Utes in Colorado who were on the warpath at that time, every reservation saw countless small bands of renegades briefly raid nearby ranches and settlers. This meant the Army was engaged almost everywhere across the vast frontier, protecting civilians and pack trains from attack or hunting down wayward bands.

The defiant Apache chief Victorio was the principal threat to Western settlements during this period. He led a large band of warriors across the deserts and mountains of southern New Mexico and Texas, spreading terror and destruction as he struck at will. A wily tactical genius, Victorio confounded his enemies by using surprise and speed and crossing the international border between Mexico and the United States to thwart pursuers. Only after an intuitive regimental commander's shift in tactics did the Army finally gain the upper hand and drive this rogue Apache into Mexico where Mexican forces ultimately trapped and killed him on a remote mountain.

The word Apache once struck fear into the hearts of their enemies and for good reason. They arrived in the American Southwest in what is now known as Arizona, New Mexico, and the Mexican province of Chihuahua

between A.D. 900 and 1200, seizing this territory from its earlier inhabitants. After securing their homeland, the Apache dispersed because the desert terrain would not support a large concentration of people. The Apache divided into subtribes, each led by its own chieftain. Chief Victorio's band was known by many names, including the *Ojo Caliente* (Warm Springs) Apache, *Mimbrenos*, Copper Mine Apache, *Chilhennes*, Eastern Chiricahuas, or more commonly, the *Mimbres*.

The desert afforded little means for a sedentary agrarian society, and the Apache maintained a mostly nomadic culture with an economic and political system based on raiding and plundering. Not surprisingly, this kept them at war with their neighbors through the centuries. Constant warfare and the ability to live in the mountains and deserts made the Apache renowned for their fighting prowess and astonishing ability to endure pain and hardship. A tight-knit clan, these people had a callous disregard for outsiders, regardless of the hue of their skin, and looked on them all as essentially less than human. The tribal social hierarchy was based on the warrior, whose status was measured by how successful he was in battle and how much plunder he acquired in raids. The great chiefs attained and held their power by the force of personality, backed by success in war. This hold on power was precarious, however, as the ambitious braves, who had been taught from early childhood to hunt, track, ride, and fight, vied for position and status for themselves.¹

Mobility meant survival to these nomadic people, and it came in the form of the horse. The Spaniards introduced the first horses to the region in the 1500s, and the Apache got theirs by trading for them or stealing them. Able then to efficiently travel long distances quickly, this tribe designed its society based on the mobility of the horse and its use in war. Raids were primarily aimed at stealing horses from other tribes, from the Spanish, and later from the Mexicans and Americans. Interestingly, the Apache never developed a devotion or spiritual link with the horse as many other tribes did. Although the horse provided mobility in the harsh environment, most Apache, in fact, were as much inclined to eat it as to ride it. This certainly simplified the problems of provisioning a mobile force in the mountains and deserts of the Southwest. Water for the horse and its rider came from rivers and springs that were well known to the Apache. If they carried anything to drink on the trail, it was usually held in a casually cleaned-out length of horse intestines and wrapped around the neck and body of a pack animal.²

The Apache initially used the classic weapons of bows and arrows, tomahawks, and knives, but by the 1850s, the rifle emerged as the preferred

weapon. Individual braves often modified their firearms to suit their own taste or to repair damage. It was not unusual for rifles to be shortened, sights altered or even removed, and leather straps used to secure the barrels to the stocks. Routine weapon maintenance and cleaning were almost non-existent, and the black powder of the era used in firearms was highly corrosive and prone to fouling. The weapons were, at times, highly unreliable as a result. Repeating arms were always favored over the muzzle-loading models, and Victorio and his band were principally armed with captured Springfield rifles and carbines. There were perhaps a few Winchester or Henry rifles taken from victims or bought from dealers who thought little of the ramifications of providing these weapons. These newer lever-action weapons were far superior in firepower to the soldiers' issued weapons, and they gave warriors armed with them a distinctive edge. On the other hand, American Indian warriors were stereotypically very poor marksmen, which is contrary to popular perception. This was due to a shortage of ammunition for practice and the generally poor condition of their arms because of lack of maintenance. Yet at close range the Apache warriors were very deadly. Two common tactics were used to compensate for poor marksmanship: ambush in the confines of a mountain pass or charging across open ground to close the distance as quickly as possible.

The Apache had always resisted the white settlement of their lands, even though they were originally allied with the Spanish against their Comanche enemies. (The Apache simply turned to raiding against the Spanish once the Comanche threat was eliminated.) Striking only when they perceived a great advantage and avoiding protracted battles and wars, the Apache were the scourge of the frontier. The bloodshed was so intense and the countermeasures were so ineffective that the Spanish eventually abandoned many of their missions in 1767 in what is now the American Southwest. The chaotic period of the Mexican Revolution during the 1820s ended all government operations to defeat the Apache as generals and politicians fought each other in various bids for power. With the government's attention diverted, the Apache could raid northern and central Mexico without fear of reprisals, resulting in much death, destruction, and bitter hatred of the Apache by the people throughout the region.

In desperation for an answer to the Apache raids the Mexican federal government instituted a bounty system by 1837. Up to 100 pesos were offered for a warrior's scalp and somewhat less for the scalp of a woman or a child. The scalp system became big business as bounty hunters such as James Johnson, John Joel Glanton, and James Kirker organized bands of men to hunt down Indians. Kirker made more than \$100,000 by his grisly

work in one “season” and was a local hero of sorts. Unfortunately, Kirker became greedy and cashed in on Mexican scalps too, which were often undistinguishable from Apache scalps. To curtail this practice, Chihuahua’s governor changed the system to pay bounty hunters by the week, and Kirker retired in protest. The Apache were now provoked beyond reconciliation, and they stepped up their raids and rampage with a vengeance.³

With the rise in violence, separate Mexican states attempted to appease the Apache by offering bribes or goods. This only brought temporary reprieve as the raiders simply turned their attention to another province until it raised its offer. In frustration, the scalp system was reinstated, and men like Kirker resumed their work in earnest, once again collecting Apache and even occasional Mexican scalps. Blame for the murders of these Mexicans was easily shifted to the hostile Indians, further inciting the populace.

The Apache thus learned the value of scalps as trophies and adopted the practice themselves. Chiefs often gave rewards for the hair of any Mexican or American. Although the practice of taking scalps initially curtailed hostile Indian activity, in the long run it did far more damage than expected at the time. The escalation of brutality convinced the Apache that peaceful coexistence with the Mexicans was impossible.

The Apache acquired another foe after the Mexican War when the United States gained some large tracts of their tribal lands. In fact, the new international border sliced right through the Apache homeland, dividing it between two competing regional powers. Naturally the Apache did not recognize a division of their lands, but they did take full advantage of the limitations such a border imposed on nations such as sanctuary from a pursuing foe lacking authority to cross the border. Interestingly, the initial contact between the Americans and Apache was guarded but peaceful. Although the Apache felt no love for the American settlers moving through their lands, they were seen as a counterbalance to the hated Mexicans. The Apache soon realized there was little difference between Mexicans and Americans when it came to them occupying what they considered tribal land. The affluent Americans proved to be more lucrative targets for raids as well.

By the 1850s it was clear to the United States that the Apache were a threat to continued settlement and harmony with its neighbor to the south. Mexico lodged loud protests against the United States for failing to stop Apache raiders from crossing the border and giving them sanctuary on their return. American settlers also placed pressure on their representatives

in Washington to halt Apache raiding and killing. The US Army deployed to the West to protect the citizens, but most of the scattered units were recalled to the east in 1861 for the duration of the Civil War. Augmented by only a few local militia units, the remaining military forces were completely inadequate for the task, leaving the hostile tribes to roam virtually at will. When the westward migration resumed in earnest after the Civil War, conflict was guaranteed as a number of settlers invariably occupied the few patches of arable Apache land. Men of dubious character arrived to sell whiskey and arms and ran gambling establishments that gladly took the Indians' money. Such contact invariably led to conflict and disputes that were most often solved by violence, and this spawned more violence.

The Reservation System

The US government sought to separate the growing number of settlers from the indigenous peoples by clearly defining tribal lands and keeping the indigenous tribes within them. This goal would evolve into a reservation system whereby the inhabitants were encouraged to plant crops and live in settlements, thus giving up the old ways of hunting and gathering. It was the Bureau of Indian Affairs within the Department of the Interior that ran the reservations. Unfortunately, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was never accused of being an efficient organization; it was permeated by corruption and mismanagement.

Indian agents were appointed and charged with overseeing reservation operations, issuing clothing and food, and constructing dwellings. The successful agents knew their constituents well and kept them peaceful and content on the reservation. Agents were also supposed to monitor the tribe's activities, particularly the potential renegade warriors' activities. In fact, the Army counted on the agents to provide advance warning of uprisings or depredations as well as to provide detailed information on the renegade warriors. The results were mixed at best. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many agents were naïve in their refusal to accept the notion that their charges were anything but peaceful, and they thought that brotherly love was all that was required for a solution to the Indian situation in the Southwest. Many others were corrupt or simply incompetent.⁴

Most American Indian tribes negotiated the boundaries of their reservations in good faith with the United States through their agents and accepted their fate. The chiefs could see that the sheer number of settlers moving into the Western frontier was so great that, in the long run, resistance was futile. Once the tribes were confined and under control, it became easy for the government to change or even ignore treaties, and the

tribes were relegated to smaller reservations, often on land incapable of sustaining them. With a full stomach and a warm blanket, the American Indians might have become resigned to life on the reservation, but often rations were short or foul, and corruption and inefficiency often deprived them of promised blankets, clothes, and shelter. This left hunting or stealing the only methods of survival, and the reservations did not provide enough land for successful hunting. Even the war-like Apache had succumbed to the reservation system by 1871, with separate bands scattered over New Mexico and Arizona. Few were content though, and from 1865 to 1898 the Army engaged in more than 1,000 battles and skirmishes to pacify the Western tribes.⁵

The Army's ability to deal effectively with hostile tribes was hampered from the start by a lack of coordination among the military departments and various government agencies. While one commander negotiated a treaty in his area another would be conducting combat operations against hostile bands that would then cross into the former's jurisdiction. When the pressure became too great, the renegade Indians would simply go to the nearest reservation and ask the Indian agent for peace and protection. Sanctuary was rarely refused. Army officers felt, often with good reason, that the reservations were simply safe havens for hostile Apaches who received refuge there as well as weapons, ammunition, provisions, and intelligence on troop movements.

The US Army in the West

The US Army was not in the peak of its development during the post-Civil War period. In fact, it faced stagnation, being slow in developing into a modern force compared to European armies of that era. It was, by and large, unseen by and unpopular with the American public. The public's exposure to the Army was confined to what it read about the Reconstruction and military ineptness in catching hostile Indians, a common feature in the newspapers of that time. There were a number of Americans who opposed the harsh treatment of the native people of the West, and the Army was a convenient target for their criticism. The Army's role, however, was not to make policy but merely to enforce it. It would conduct this thankless task for more than 20 years on the Western plains, hated by all sides, the victim and the perpetrator of American domestic policy.

Congress set the Army's strength in 1874 at a mere 27,442. There were more than 166 scattered forts and outposts meant to guard the vast expanse of the Western frontier. These were manned in most cases by small commands, seldom larger than a company, usually consisting of no

more than 50 men. Post commanders were required to take great risks in splitting their commands for escort duty, gambling that there would be enough troops to do the job at hand and at the same time protect the post. The only way for department commanders to undertake large operations was to assemble an ad hoc force from a number of forts and outposts for a specific mission. This practice stripped areas of Army protection, and the force that was formed generally lacked unit cohesion.⁶

The life of a soldier on the frontier was a dull routine that bore down hard on the men. There was tactical drill, stable and herd duty, and parade. There was also the monotony of chores and fatigue details necessary for the normal operation of the posts such as logging teams for the sawmill, work in the garden, and construction work using materials ranging from sod and adobe to brick and lumber. Guard duty was tedious, but it added an element of danger to the duty. Men were usually not allowed to leave camp and had to rely on themselves or alcohol for entertainment and diversion. Barracks conditions were often horrendously primitive and unsanitary. Officers generally fared little better, despite their position and their significantly higher, yet still meager, pay. Few officers and even fewer men brought their wives and families to the frontier outposts. Instead, they left them back home or at the larger posts, such as Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which at that time was the main logistics base and headquarters for the Army in the West.

The harshness of Army life deterred most quality recruits; generally recruits came from the lower rungs of society. Immigrants and those unable to find jobs elsewhere formed most of the Army ranks. These men often showed up at their units with little or no training and tended not to get much training upon their arrival. Recruits simply had to learn survival in the harsh environment while on the job. For instance, the soldiers were allocated 10 rounds of ammunition per month for target practice. Turnover in the ranks was also high—between 25 and 40 percent annually by death, discharge, and desertion, the latter being the greatest cause.⁷

The senior officers were by and large veterans of the Civil War and had seen their share of combat, although of a vastly different nature. Most had returned to their permanent, more junior, ranks during the demobilization period and commanded units much smaller than they had previously. As seasoned veterans they generally held the respect and admiration of their men. The junior officers formed the backbone of the operations against the hostile tribes, leading their small detachments with only general guidance from above. The vast distances from headquarters and the poor communications required that each commander display a great deal of initiative and

sound judgment. However, promotions for all officer grades were stagnant and morale suffered accordingly.

Junior officers serving on the frontier without service in the Civil War had received their commissions through the US Military Academy, West Point, New York. They were taught general tactics there but not tactics specifically tailored to fighting the Indians. Supplemental instruction was occasionally given, particularly after difficult campaigns such as those against the Nez Perce and Sioux Indians. It is likely that the frontier veterans posted to West Point as instructors passed on their lessons at least informally. The international law courses taught at the academy approached the subject of Indian warfare indirectly, somewhat equating it with irregular warfare. Many officers concluded, though, that since the Indians did not subscribe to the contemporary laws and customs of war the laws and customs did not extend to them either. In effect, the soldiers felt free to use whatever methods needed to subdue the Indians. On the other hand, the cadets were also taught that principles of humanity and Christian charity dictated that harsh measures were to be tempered and used only when absolutely necessary, lest the Americans sink to the level of their foes. So communal punishment and the destruction of property, food, and supplies were acceptable, yet the wanton slaughter of men, women, and children was not. There were indeed a few officers who espoused extermination as the means to end the Indian problems in the West, but these men were a distinct minority.⁸

Like West Point, the Army in the field during this period had no formal tactics in fighting Indians, although it had experience in doing so dating back to Colonial times. The common tactic used was an offensive strategy that called for a drive into hostile territory, forcing the tribe to do battle or lose its food supply. Another tactic was to conduct a relentless pursuit. Even if unable to catch its prey, a unit could simply wear down an Indian force, compelling it to leave a given area. Defeating the Indians often became a matter of locating their camps and attacking them by surprise. This was achieved by adapting the standard tactics of night marches and dawn raids. Experienced commanders also used ruses such as leaving campfires burning at night after the troops had moved or hanging back during a pursuit to lull the hostiles into a false sense of security.⁹

As for materiel, the Army relied primarily on modified Civil War surplus during the Indian war period. Commanders and troops continually complained about the regulation service uniforms, as the thin wool garments were not sufficient to protect from the harsh winters of the northern plains and were far too hot for the rugged Southwestern heat. Lacking support from

the quartermaster department, soldiers turned to improvisation. Using privately procured clothing items made for a distinctly un-uniform look; officers and men wore shirts and trousers of various colors and materials and sported a dazzling array of headgear.

The condition of the weapons was only slightly better. A board of Army officers examined and tested more than 100 new infantry weapons in 1872, adopting a modified model 1860 Springfield rifle, known today as the “trapdoor Springfield.” The standard variant used in the campaign against Victorio fired a .45- to .70-caliber center-fire copper cartridge filled with black powder. With a muzzle velocity of just over 1,300 feet per second, it was accurate to ranges between 200 and 300 yards.¹⁰ This weapon was rugged, reliable, and accurate but was outclassed in firepower by other popular weapons of the day such as the lever-action rifles Winchester made. Soldiers often faced Indians armed with these repeating weapons. For close-in fighting, the cavalry was issued either the Colt model 1860, modified to use cartridges, or the famous Colt single-action model 1873 pistol. Sabers were rarely used and were often left behind during a campaign.

Army horses were generally bigger and stronger than their native prairie counterparts, but they were accustomed to a diet of grain fodder. Without a steady diet of grain the cavalry horses lacked stamina and became easily jaded. The heat and poor water on the trail exacerbated this problem. Additionally, the cavalry horses were shod, necessitating constant maintenance and shoe replacement in the rocky terrain. In short, cavalry units required substantial logistics support, and even when provided, the horses were temperamental in performance. Supplies were generally hauled by wagon trains while on campaign, although a few units preferred pack mules. The wagons tended to slow columns down, and while the mules could traverse the rugged terrain with ease, they could not carry loads as efficiently. Either method was extremely vulnerable to the fast-riding Apaches’ interdiction. Interestingly, while on a long march the infantry generally made better time than the cavalry, being free of the need of frequent rest and care for mounts. Infantrymen were not able to dash after the swift Apaches, so they were relegated, for the most part, to accompanying the supply trains as guards.

One of the Army’s innovators during this period was General George Crook. A veteran corps commander of the Civil War and commander of the Department of Arizona from 1871 to 1875, Crook studied the Apache way of war and decided that major changes were needed. He determined that the best way to fight the Apache was to copy their rapid movement

techniques. Crook began using mule trains to speed his columns' movement. He also stripped the baggage trains and individual soldiers of their excessive weight and trained his soldiers in the mechanics of long and rapid campaigns.

National Archives



Figure 1. Government pack mules.

Crook's pivotal development was enlisting Indians in the Army as scouts for six-month tours. Recruits for the scouts were easy to find by going to a rival tribe that harbored ancient hostilities toward the Apache. Recruits were also found among the Apache. Many Apache were willing to fight against the renegades whom they viewed as a long-term threat to their tribe. Regular soldier pay further induced enlistments. These scouts were adept at tracking even the most elusive renegades and proved invaluable as guides in finding water, provisions, and trails. Occasionally they also served as couriers and engaged in actual combat. During the Victorio Campaign, scouts wore various pieces of uniform that best suited each individual, and as a result, the risk of fratricide from the regular soldiers was high. Scouts rarely received any military training, and Army discipline did not apply. Organized into companies of 26 men and led by white officers, the Indian scouts earned a reputation of dependability and valor throughout the Indian wars. Without their efforts, defeating the hostiles would have taken far longer and cost many more lives.¹¹



National Archives

Figure 2. Apache scouts drilling with rifles, Fort Wingate, New Mexico.

In response to the public outcry to solve the Indian problems in the West, Congress passed legislation in 1866 to increase the size of the Regular Army, which raised the number of cavalry regiments from six to 10 and the number of infantry regiments from 19 to 45. Legislation stipulated that two cavalry and four infantry regiments “shall be composed of colored men.” Thus, the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry Regiments were raised. With few exceptions white officers led these men. By the early 1870s the term “Buffalo Soldier” was commonly used in reference to the black cavalry troops, but today it generally applies to all troops of African-American descent who served on the frontier. The term originated with the native peoples and was readily adopted by the Army and civilians alike, except for the soldiers themselves who did not care for the distinction at the time. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments formed the backbone of the Army’s campaign against Victorio.¹²

Major General Philip H. Sheridan, then commanding the Military Division of the Gulf, authorized the organization of the 9th US Cavalry Regiment under the command of Colonel Edward Hatch on 3 August 1866. The pay of \$13 per month was a great incentive for the former slaves who dominated the ranks, and the mustering station found a large number of them from the crowded streets of New Orleans, Louisiana. To give experience to these new regiments, discharges were authorized for men then serving in wartime volunteer “colored” regiments who desired to transfer to this regular regiment. These men were highly desired, and they eventually filled most of the noncommissioned officer positions. Additional recruits from Kentucky and horses from St. Louis, Missouri, later completed the organization of the regiment, which initially had just over 800 men on its rolls.¹³

Winter 1866-1867 was spent organizing and drilling the 9th Cavalry into an effective unit. The orders regarding stable duty were especially strict. Few officers had as yet joined, and the number on duty with the regiment was so small that a scheme of squadron organization was adopted to ensure that at least one officer was present with each squadron for every drill or other duty. Most of the enlisted soldiers were woefully ignorant of military discipline and procedures. Assiduous labor and constant drilling made much headway so that by the end of March 1867 most of the regiment was ordered to proceed to San Antonio, Texas. Two companies were detached and sent to Brownsville, Texas, remaining there several years. By then the officers of the regiment were nearly all appointed and with their commands.¹⁴

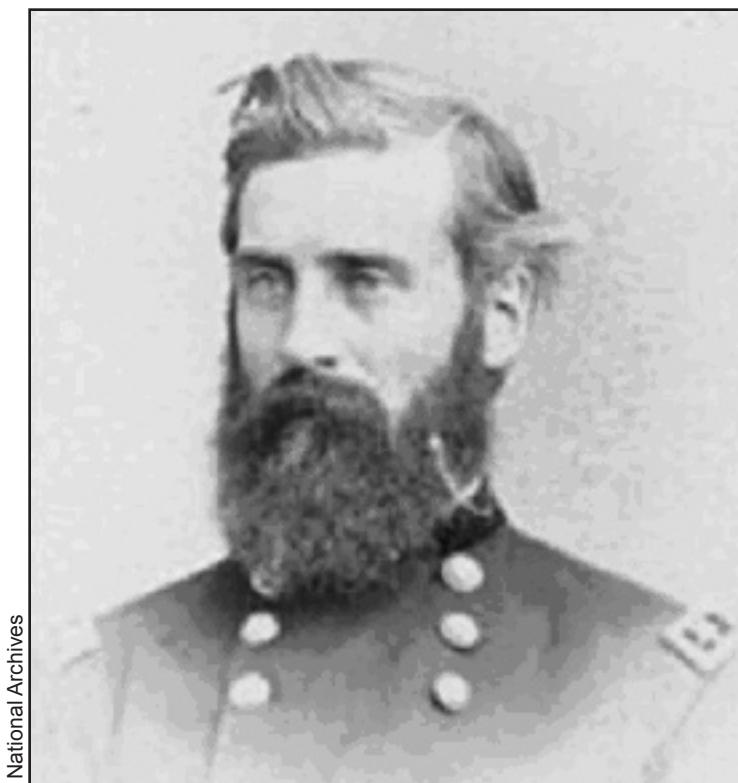


Figure 3. Edward Hatch, 9th US Cavalry.

Within seven months of its organization, the 9th Cavalry was ordered to western and southwestern Texas to assist in opening up that vast territory to settlement. This territory was harsh and foreboding, with oases,

such as they were, dubbed with appropriate names such as Sulfur Springs, Gypsum Bottom, and Hellfire Flat. The regiment was dispersed across the district, with the headquarters and four companies at Fort Stockton, four companies at Fort Davis, and two companies remaining in Brownsville. The regiment's principal duties were to establish and protect the mail and stage route from San Antonio to El Paso, to reestablish law and order in a territory that had been in near anarchy during the Civil War, to prevent marauding by Indians, and to capture all roving bands and confine them to their reservations. In short, the 9th Cavalry was a very busy regiment.

After seven years of patrolling desolate surroundings, the regiment was transferred to New Mexico in 1875, with its headquarters in Santa Fe and the troops scattered all over that territory and beyond. The general duty was about the same as in Texas. During the time the regiment remained in New Mexico, various troops and detachments were employed in capturing and returning numerous roving bands of Apache to their reservations. By the time of the Victorio Campaign, the effective regimental strength was about 400 men.

Victorio, Chief of the *Mimbres* Apache

Victorio had lived through the events that saw his people fall from a great warrior tribe to having to settle on reservations. Very little is known of his early life, but he was probably born in the Black Mountain Range of New Mexico around 1820 and reared as a member of the Eastern *Chiricahua* tribe, often referred to as the *Mimbres* Apache. Many in northern Mexico at the time thought he was part Mexican or even a full Mexican captured on one of the many Apache raids. Somewhat unusual for a chief, Victorio had only one wife, to whom he was completely devoted. Victorio rode with the famous medicine man, Nana, and Geronimo on raids into northern Mexico in the 1850s, and in 1862, he was said to have allied his band under chieftain Mangas Coloradas. After Mangas died in 1863, Victorio rapidly rose in influence and emerged as a full tribal leader, forming a group of Eastern *Chiricahuas* and *Mescaleros* into a tribe of about 400 fanatically devoted warriors. These warriors fought without mercy to their enemies, taking what they wanted and destroying what they did not.¹⁵

On the Reservation

The various bands of Apache were forced onto reservations in Arizona and New Mexico following General Crook's successful operations in 1872 and 1873. Soon after their reservation was established in New Mexico, the *Mimbres* Apache abandoned it and followed Victorio to the *Chiricahua* reservation in Arizona, but the climate, food supply, water—almost



Figure 4. Victorio, Chief of the *Mimbres* Apache.

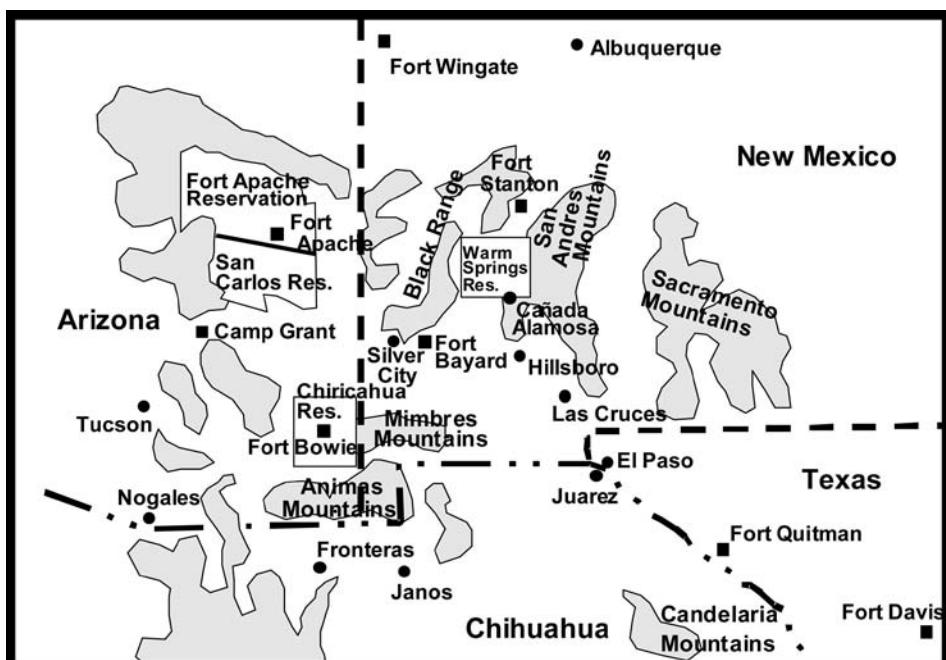
everything—felt wrong to them, as they were in a foreign land. Victorio's band stayed there, resisting all pleas and threats until the government finally gave in and provided it with a new reservation in 1874. This one was located in central New Mexico at Ojo Caliente, or Warm Springs. The *Mimbres* tribe regarded this as its real home and was happy there for the next few years.

Unfortunately for all, the United States then decided on a policy of concentrating the Indian tribes into larger, more logically manageable, reservations while ignoring intratribal hostilities. Victorio's people were informed that they would have to move again, but they were assured that it would be no farther west than the San Carlos Reservation. Victorio and his band submitted to this in May 1877. Having to leave their half-ripe crops behind, they were bitter and dissatisfied from the start. The flat terrain was strange and ugly to these people from the mountains, and they had to

share it with the detested Western *Chiricahuas*. Efforts at integrating the *Mimbres* into the reservation and government affairs failed. Small groups of young warriors left the reservation over a period of several weeks in an attempt to live by hunting but returned when they were either captured by Army patrols or on their own accord when faced with starvation.

Soon, though, Victorio, now nearly 60 years old, fled the reservation with about 300 men, women, and children and raided the surrounding countryside. Needing horses, Victorio and his band attacked the nearby ranches, killing 12 settlers and capturing more than 100 animals. A combined force of reservation police and Army patrols cornered his band in the Natares Mountains, but Victorio was able to extract his people to safety temporarily. Several battles with elements of the 9th Cavalry occurred over the next few weeks, with the Apache taking most of the casualties. With his people nearly destitute of food, clothing, and weapons and after losing more than a third of his people, Victorio took the rest out of the desolate mountains to Fort Wingate and surrendered.¹⁶

By now the government was convinced that consolidating the Apache tribes only exacerbated an already volatile situation. Because the *Mimbres* people were so restless, most of them received permission to return to



Map 1. The area of operations.

Warm Springs. They had remained there for only a year when this order was once again rescinded in August 1878. Soldiers arrived to escort Victorio and his band back to San Carlos, and the *Mimbres* were divided into fragments after their return. While many warriors stayed on the reservation with its miserable conditions, small bands again chose instead to flee into the mountains to live as before, led by such notables as Chiefs Juh, Nolgee, and Nana. Victorio led one such band into Mexico for a short time but reappeared at the Warm Springs Reservation near Fort Stanton in February 1879, having lost a number of his people to exposure and disease. He wanted his tribe to settle there and gained permission from Indian Agent Russell to remain in the area temporarily until Washington was consulted. Meanwhile, the defiant Victorio told those around him how preferable life was off the reservation and of his wish to pursue that dream. Russell quickly saw him as an agitator and a threat to the peace. Although he argued in favor of Victorio's request to be allowed to remain at Warm Springs, the Army refused to grant permission without specific instructions from Washington. As government agencies sought a solution, there was an uneasy peace at the reservation. This peace was indeed short-lived.

Victorio Takes the Warpath

To date Victorio had not received any punishment for his raiding and murders, but public outcry was growing. Tension on the reservation was growing too as he confronted Agent Russell over the conditions there. Since Victorio's people were officially there temporarily, pending a decision on their return to the San Carlos Reservation, Russell was not authorized to issue them rations. As a result, they had to fend for themselves and were hungry. The heated exchanges over conditions and the rumor that Victorio's men were making *tiswin*, a narcotic beverage made from malted grain and jimsonweed, led Russell to request troops from Fort Stanton for his personal protection. When Victorio saw an approaching column of soldiers, he and his followers hastily left the reservation for what would be the final time. He had heard that there was a new judge and district attorney, and he believed he would be tried for old murders and horse stealing and sent to prison or to exile in Florida. Preferring death to either, he fled on 21 August 1879 with about 80 warriors along with their wives and children. Victorio's final abandonment of the reservation surprised Agent Russell. He had repeatedly assured the Apache under his charge that their families would remain together and they would be established in their new homeland before the onset of winter. The Apache he talked to gave him the impression they were looking forward to the move.¹⁷

Once off the reservation Victorio's band had to survive using the old

method, by raiding. Victorio had stolen more than 15 horses from the reservation, but he needed more to maintain his mobility. Within days, 40 Apache warriors attacked an Army outpost near Warm Springs, killing five soldiers and three civilians and making off with the 68 horses and mules of Company E, 9th Cavalry, under the command of Captain Ambrose Hooker. A few days later, Victorio struck another outpost some 20 miles south of the Warm Springs Reservation. There the scene was repeated, with 10 soldiers killed and all of the livestock captured. In response, Colonel Hatch deployed every company of the 9th Cavalry to the field. Additional troops from scattered posts throughout the district were also consolidated to meet this threat. Lieutenant Charles Gatewood and his Apache scouts were brought in from Arizona. Hatch then deployed detachments led by junior officers across New Mexico, with orders to find Victorio's elusive band.¹⁸

Victorio's force varied in size, starting with almost 80 warriors and growing to no more than 300 warriors at any given time. Including women and children, his band never exceeded 450. Newspaper stories at the time claimed his followers included Comanches and Navajos, but that is uncertain. It is believed that a party of *Mescaleros* under Chief Caballero later joined Victorio for a time, which would account for the occasional high numbers. As Victorio's success and fame grew, young warriors flocked to him or at least emulated him by raiding in their own local areas. These scattered incidents inflated Victorio's true strength and gave observers the impression that he was able to move fantastic distances over a short time.

A detachment of the 9th Cavalry, under Second Lieutenant George W. Smith, found a true trail and chased Victorio to the Rio Grande River but failed to catch him. Victorio posted braves as a rear guard to push large stones down on the pursuing soldiers, thus discouraging pursuit. The Apache also knew the terrain intimately, and the braves were simply too fast, often riding their horses to death. They would then eat the dead horses and steal more to carry on the fight. Always on fresh mounts and often splitting into small groups, Victorio and his band crossed into the safety of Chihuahua, Mexico, before they could be intercepted. There he extorted ammunition and supplies in return for sparing a village or two from destruction. Some villages offered the Apache liquor in the hopes that he and his band would become drunk so they could be easily killed later. Victorio had seen this trick work far too many times over the years and forbade his people to drink the Mexican alcohol.

In the brief period of Victorio's absence, the new territorial governor of New Mexico, Lew Wallace of Civil War fame and author of *Ben Hur*,

asked Washington for authority to field volunteer companies to pursue Victorio. Hastily raised companies such as these were repeatedly shown to be useless in cornering the nimble Apache, and they were just as likely as not to be ambushed and destroyed by their intended prey. The request was refused, but Wallace was assured that federal troops were concentrating in his territory. Not waiting for their arrival, local communities formed militias for home defense. The larger towns were thus able to deter major Apache raids, but the smaller hamlets could not arm enough men to do the same. When Victorio chose to attack them in the future, the small towns felt his wrath.¹⁹

Convinced they were Victorio's next target, many settlers and ranchers from across the territory pleaded with civil authorities for protection. The press echoed their sentiments, chastising and ridiculing the Army for its inability to capture or destroy the wayward Apache. The controversial use of "colored" troops was also heavily discussed in the editorials, some lacking confidence in their abilities, others decrying the practice of arming former slaves at all, and others portraying them as saviors of the troubled land. News of real and alleged Indian raids spread rapidly, and incidents that had no connection with Victorio were ascribed to him. Officers who acted on the supposed validity of these reports instead of on scouts and reconnoitering were constantly frustrated in locating Victorio's trail.

South of the border, officials in Chihuahua were beset by a constant threat of revolution and an ongoing economic depression. They were also frustrated by Victorio's raiding when he came south to avoid American patrols. They appointed Joaquín Terrazas colonel of the militia and sent him to hunt down and destroy Victorio and his band. Terrazas, a seasoned veteran of Indian fighting, knew how to campaign in the mountains and deserts and held the confidence of the local populace. His ferocity in battle was legendary, and he set about organizing a militia force to deal with Victorio, appointing men of competence to key regional positions. This did not mean the militias would be effective; in fact, most of them were made up of men with little or no training. Many were far more interested in scalp bounties and booty than in capturing Victorio. On the occasions when the newly organized militias were called out to fight, more often than not Terrazas' men withdrew when the Apache promised to return to the United States without further trouble. When the militias chose to chase Victorio, they were usually ambushed and defeated.²⁰

Victorio also had to contend with another paramilitary organization called the Texas Rangers. Captain George W. Baylor commanded a Ranger company at El Paso that participated in the campaign. It never numbered

more than 20 men and confined its activities mostly to west Texas, with an occasional unauthorized foray into Mexico. These men knew the terrain and were expert in tracking, having hunted desperados and renegades for years. They were renowned for their firepower as well, being armed with state-of-the-art lever-action rifles, a pair of revolvers on their belts, and another pair on the saddles for close-in fighting. With such firepower, the Rangers could take on many times their number. The Rangers' contribution to the campaign was primarily as an intelligence-gathering asset, occasionally reporting Victorio's whereabouts and activities to the Army. By September their reports and others made it clear that Victorio was moving north out of Mexico and back into the United States.²¹

Victorio's Return

A force from the 9th Cavalry led by Lieutenant Colonel Dudley, consisting of Company B under Captain Dawson and Company E under Captain Hooker, searched southwestern New Mexico for signs of Victorio's arrival. Two additional companies (C and G) were nearby and available to support this force if needed. Navajo scouts found Victorio's two-day-old trail at the head of the Sierra Blanca Canyon on 16 September, and riders brought word to Captain Hooker and his company to converge at that point. Meanwhile Dawson's troops followed the trail up to the head of the Las Animas River where, on 18 September, they stumbled into Victorio's band. Here, within strongly entrenched positions behind rocks overlooking a deep canyon, the Apache awaited the troops' advance. These were conditions Victorio preferred, and he chose to fight the first major battle of the campaign here. As the cavalry troops dismounted and advanced up the canyon, a single shot killed one of the Navajo scouts, and a withering crossfire rained down on the startled soldiers. Hemmed in on three sides, the two companies were trapped and cut off from help.

From 3 miles away, Captain Beyer and Lieutenant Hugo of Companies C and G, respectively, rode hard with their units to the sound of firing. These companies dismounted and advanced up the canyon, but a fierce Apache counterattack stopped them dead in their tracks, routing the stunned troops. One five-man detachment under Lieutenant Robert T. Emmet was left behind, but his prominent position and his men's good marksmanship provided effective covering fire for the withdrawing companies. In the confusion and smoke of the battle, Emmet eventually extracted his men from their peril and was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his gallantry.²²

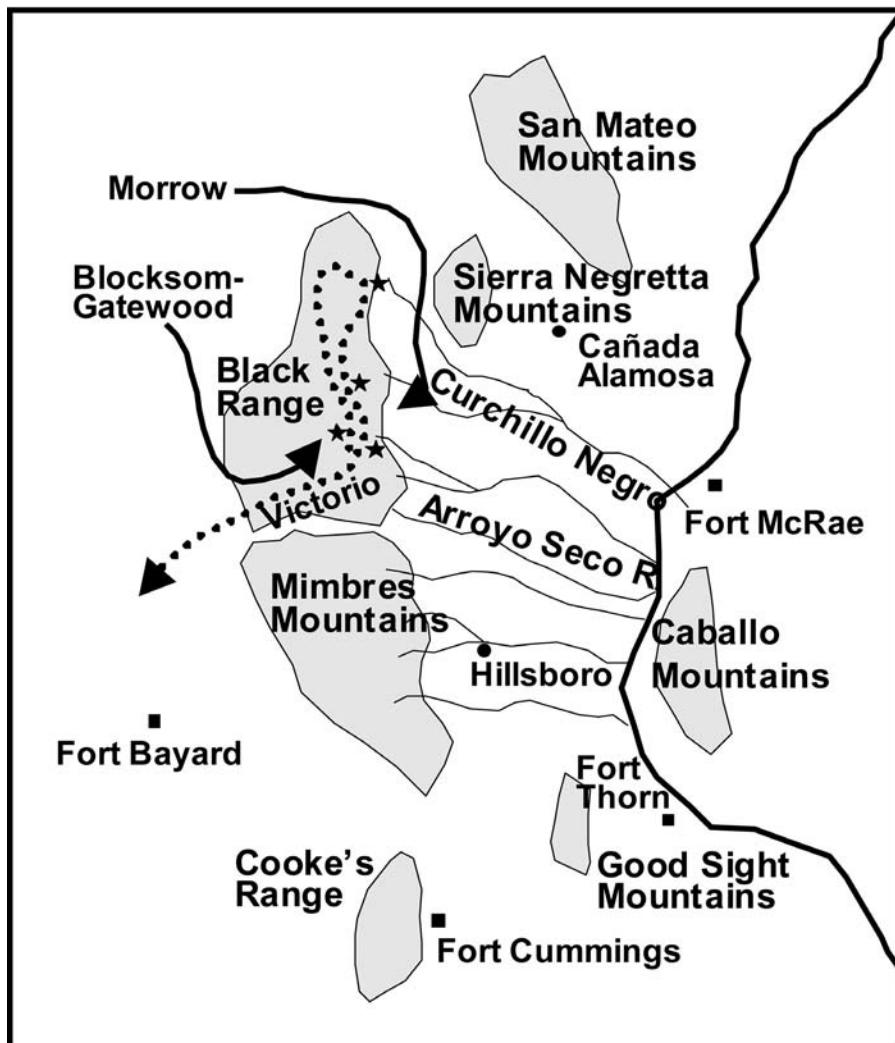
Companies C and G recovered from their initial panic and settled into

the business of rooting out Victorio's men one by one from the rocks above. After a day-long fight with five men killed and one man wounded, the cavalrymen were not able to dislodge their enemy from the rocks, but had established contact with the trapped B and E Companies. At dusk the entire force was ordered to withdraw to avoid encirclement by the hostiles, and a flank attack on Victorio's braves provided a distraction to extract Companies B and E. Refusing to leave his wounded to certain death at the hands of the Apache, Lieutenant Matthias W. Day advanced about 600 feet under heavy fire to retrieve a disabled soldier. His actions earned him the immediate ire of Lieutenant Colonel Dudley who wanted to court-martial him, but instead a board of inquiry cleared Day and he later received the Medal of Honor. Sergeant John Denny also ran a gauntlet of fire to retrieve a soldier, and he too received the Medal of Honor. Although personnel losses were light—eight killed and a few wounded—the same was not true for the horses. Thirty-two mounts were killed and six were wounded in the fight, and 53 horses and mules were abandoned, leaving the cavalry force largely dismounted. Losses to Victorio's band were estimated at only two or three warriors, but the Apache custom of carrying off their dead and wounded made any accurate count impossible. Rumors circulated for a brief time that Victorio was killed. What had become very apparent was that it was virtually impossible to strike Victorio if he did not want to be caught.²³

With Victorio's operating area now known, Major Albert P. Morrow of the 9th Cavalry assumed command of operations in southern New Mexico. He consolidated his available forces, numbering nearly 200 officers and men of four companies and 36 Apache scouts. Seventy-three men of this force were still dismounted as a result of Victorio's earlier raids. Morrow's plan was to send the scouts under Lieutenant Charles B. Gatewood and a detachment under Captain Augustus P. Blocksom through the Mimbres Mountains toward Victorio's suspected lair. By using pack mules, this force would travel light and fast. Meanwhile, most of the force, supplied by wagon, would take an old road around the range. The plan was to have the forces under Gatewood and Blocksom attack from the west while Morrow's men attacked up a valley from the east, thus trapping Victorio between them.²⁴

The plan was doomed from the onset, as Victorio would not allow himself to be caught in such a trap. Although the force accompanied by pack mules did demonstrate some agility, the force relying on wagons was far too slow and cumbersome. By the time Morrow was in position and the operation commenced, Victorio was no longer where he was believed to

be, having left some three days earlier. Undaunted as yet, Major Morrow attempted to track and intercept Victorio, combing countless valleys and peaks of the rugged mountains. Yet the slow-moving soldiers could not catch the agile Apache raiders.



Map 2. Major Morrow's double envelopment.

The troops under Blocksom's command located and followed Victorio's trail near the Arroyo Seco River. It was now raining constantly, and the soldiers were miserable. After three days, scouts determined that Victorio was unaware that he was being followed, for his passage was marked

with broken-down animals left to die, and no effort was being made to conceal the trail. As the column continued the rain ended, bringing out a scorching sun that seared the soldiers in their wool uniforms. The scouts went in advance of the column not only to look for Victorio but also to look for water, which was now in critically short supply because the troops had been on the trail for 11 days.

On 28 September the Apache scouts discovered Victorio's camp in a deep canyon, and a few shots were exchanged. The renegades thought that only the scouts were present, but they soon realized their error. Finding Victorio's camp, the scouts passed the word to the troops. By the time Major Morrow assembled his forces, he believed it was too dark to attack and ordered the men into bivouac for the night. During the night the scouts went cautiously forward to surround Victorio's camp in the rugged terrain. In the early morning, about 80 men were dismounted and moved forward to assault the hostile camp, but again the Apache had slipped away. Victorio's known losses were two dead warriors and a squaw, while the soldiers had not lost a man.

The next day, 29 September, Major Morrow had slightly better luck. The scouts in advance of his column had again spotted Victorio's band and were engaged in a running gunfight. Although by the time the troops were assembled it was late in the day and darkness was approaching, Morrow ordered an immediate attack, knowing his foe would not give him another chance. The scouts under Gatewood and Blocksom rushed the camp, and the soldiers followed, coming under fire from Apache in the surrounding hills. The fighting ended with the darkness around 2200. No casualties were reported among the soldiers, and three dead Apache were found in the camp. Morrow's men captured about 60 horses and mules, of which a dozen were Captain Hooker's stolen animals. However, Victorio and his braves managed to drive off most of their stock and left very little of value in their deserted camp. Sergeant Thomas Boyne was later awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery in action on this day.²⁵

Victorio did not go far this time. In fact, his warriors simply occupied positions among the rocks overlooking their abandoned camp. The steep walls of the canyon were about 800 feet high and covered with scattered trees and heavy underbrush. At daybreak on 30 September these braves began a hot fire on Captain Blocksom's mounted outposts and then on Major Morrow's camp. The soldiers were under arms in short order, returning fire and advancing in small groups, bounding from one rock to another. The sounds of battle reverberated up and down the valley, putting the participants' nerve and courage to the test. As the soldiers advanced in

number, Victorio's men fell back a short distance and kept fighting. The firefight raged up the canyon through most of the day, with the soldiers trying to make their way around to flank their enemy and get behind them to cut off their escape. Each time they came close to doing so, the Apache would simply fall back a short distance and resume firing. By 1500, the Apache were driven to higher ground. The consensus among the Army officers was that these new positions were impossible to assail. In the crags of the steep slope the braves taunted the soldiers. Pools of blood and bloody rags left behind were the only evidence that more Apache had been hit.²⁶

Faced by the impassable terrain, Major Morrow decided to withdraw down the canyon and look for another way to come to grips with Victorio. As the blue column trudged off, it came under sporadic fire all the way to the desert floor near Curchillo Negro. Captain Francis S. Dodge later received the Medal of Honor for his actions that day. Watching the soldiers withdraw, no doubt Victorio and his men believed they had repulsed their enemy. They had for the moment but at a great cost. A number of braves were killed and many were wounded. Among the dead was Victorio's son, Washington. The grieving father decided to head west into the Mogollon Range, but the column was slowed to a crawl because the Apache carried their wounded.²⁷

Meanwhile Major Morrow regrouped his command and sent out scouts to relocate Victorio on 1 October. They returned by nightfall and reported the Apache band was only 4 miles from the camp that had been captured two days earlier. Morrow ordered Blocksom and his scouts to get behind Victorio while he approached up the small canyon to the new hostile camp. The plan was to attack simultaneously at daylight. The operation commenced as planned, but the soldiers found only burning fires and strips of meat hanging to dry. The camp had been heavily fortified and would have been difficult to take had Victorio chosen to defend it. Instead the Apache chief chose to take the trail west toward the Mogollon Range.

Scouts were sent out once again and returned on 3 October, confirming that Victorio's trail led toward the range by way of Malpais Creek. Major Morrow took his command to the Warm Springs Reservation, about 15 miles away, for rations and ammunition and to shoe some of the horses and mules. He also sent a report of Victorio's movements to Fort Bayard and requested more men.

Morrow's command left Warm Springs on 5 October, heading south along the North Star Road. The cavalry tried to locate Victorio's trail by

crossing it or by cutting him off should he veer from the Mogollon Range and head toward Mexico. After a march of about 35 miles, Morrow met with two detachments from Fort Bayard under the command of Captain George A. Purington of the 9th Cavalry and Second Lieutenant James A. Maney of the 15th Infantry. After more than five days of searching, these officers reported no signs of crossing Victorio's trail, so Major Morrow sent his scouts north again and rested his men while awaiting their report. The scouts returned on 16 October, having indeed found signs Victorio's band had crossed the road and were heading west. But finding his trail was not enough. Throughout the month Victorio struck at will, attacking and burning ranches and settlements. He also discouraged pursuit by fouling known water supplies with animal carcasses.

After marching more than 117 miles in 79 hours, Morrow's command was eventually whittled down to just 81 troops and 18 scouts, the rest strung behind him with broken-down horses and all short of rations and water. Morrow tenaciously pursued Victorio, though, and caught up with him on 29 October near the Corralitas River. There was a brief fight, but the soldiers could not drive the Apache from their strong position. Low on supplies, water, and ammunition, Morrow had little choice but to return to Fort Bayard, arriving on 2 November, his force completely used up. Most of the horses had been lost to combat casualties, exposure, and lack of forage. The men were exhausted, as those who had lost their mounts had to return on foot. Although he did not decisively defeat Victorio, Morrow apparently drove him from southeastern New Mexico for the time being.

Not surprisingly, the Army came under fire from a hostile press that did not understand how the Army could not decisively defeat a small band of renegades. Citizens chaffed at the restrictions placed on the Army and law enforcement officials in crossing the Mexican border in pursuit.

“Old Vic” was indeed on his way to Mexico, but he was certainly not defeated. Along his route he attacked scattered farms and ranches in the search for cattle, horses, and weapons. Hearing hostile Apache had attacked Mason's ranch, the good citizens of Mesilla assembled 20 volunteers to go to the rescue. Having already made quick work of the ranch, the Apache ambushed the relief column, which retreated to another ranch and sent for help. Letting the inept militia go, Victorio turned his attention to two supply wagons creaking unsuspectingly toward Mason's ranch. In a matter of minutes 11 men and one woman were killed, and one woman and one child were taken captive. More volunteers arrived only to find Victorio had vanished and crossed again into Mexico.

Frustrated by Victorio's raids and the failure to capture him, the various civil and military departments began an angry exchange of letters and telegrams. The Army blamed the Indian agents for being lenient and charged that the agents should be able to monitor the braves on the reservations and report immediately any signs of impending departure. The agents countered that the Army was inefficient and the troops wrongheaded in their attitudes toward the Indians. The regional newspapers naturally picked up on this friction and were delighted to report on it, adding, of course, their own criticism and hostility. Major Morrow took it upon himself to submit his own editorial replies, citing he had engaged Victorio and had driven him out of the region and into Mexico. These letters drew editorial catcalls as editors credited the volunteers at Mesilla for driving Victorio south of the border. However, many of the imperiled settlers, miners, and ranchers began to realize that far more of them might have perished had it not been for the persistence and sacrifices of the long-marching Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry.²⁸

While the newspapers and various government agencies hurled accusations, Victorio rested his warriors in the Candelaria Mountains in Chihuahua where he remained relatively secure during November. From his position, he had an ample water supply and could observe the happenings on the plain below. On 7 November a group of Mexicans from the nearby town of Carrizal approached his camp, looking for cattle thieves. They were ambushed and killed. Another group sent to find out what happened to the first was also wiped out in the same place. A plea for assistance was sent to Paso del Norte (near present-day El Paso), and 10 of Baylor's Texas Rangers (Company C) from nearby Yselta, Texas, were permitted to enter Mexico to help pin down Victorio. When the Rangers and Mexicans, in force, arrived at the massacre scene, the Apache were long gone.²⁹

On 28 November another party of *Mimbres* Apache left their reservation after killing an ox and 15 head of sheep and packing the meat on stolen horses. The amount of meat taken was far more than the small party's needs, and this suggested it was destined for a much larger group. Speculation that Victorio had reentered the United States was confirmed on 1 December when two miners reported spotting him in the Sacramento Mountains. Over the next few months Victorio had several clashes with cavalry patrols there but always on his terms and when the terrain was to his advantage. He and his band maneuvered easily through the country that wore down soldiers and their horses after only a few days of active scouting.

Victorio sustained his operations primarily by acquiring what he needed

from his defeated foes. His band took arms and ammunition from the dead, from traders, and from some of the Mexican sheepherders whom they had killed. Since everything Victorio used was readily available and expendable, he could travel light and fast. The one exception to the rule, and his primary logistics concern, was water. In the mountains and desert plains, even the hardy Apache could not carry large enough amounts of essential water. As such, Victorio had to plan his operations around the water sources in the region.

The bloody ambushes near Carrizal spurred the Mexican government into action. The Mexican authorities subsequently informed the US Government that they had renewed their pursuit of Victorio and expected to drive him back into Texas once again. Forces totaling 500 men, led by General Geronimo Treviño and Colonel Joaquín Terrazas, were in the field. Both were highly experienced and respected men, and expectations for success were high. However, indigenous revolutionary ferment in Chihuahua prevented their effective use since they were overly dispersed to keep order in the cities.

Meanwhile Victorio learned of the Mexican forces assembling to meet him. Curiously, he did not offer serious resistance and chose instead to evade his Mexican pursuers and reenter the United States. Scattered reports of the Apache moving north toward the border reached Colonel Hatch in early January 1880, and he ordered the entire 9th Cavalry Regiment to the field. For the first time he took personal command of the operation to hunt down Victorio, no longer relying on a subordinate officer placed in command of an ad hoc detachment. Hatch planned to use the full weight of his regiment to keep continuous pressure on the hostiles to wear them down. Learning of Apache movements in the Mimbres Mountains, he sent three companies and about 50 Indian scouts into the hills to look for Victorio. Major Morrow was in command of this battalion and closed with Victorio on 9 January near the head of the Puerco River. Victorio eluded his pursuers but had running firefights with them on 17 January in the San Mateo Mountains, on 30 January in the San Andres Mountains, and fought there again on 3 February. On 27 January Morrow's supply train was attacked but fortunately not captured. None of these engagements was decisive, and the total loss to Morrow was three men killed, including Lieutenant Hansell French, and seven men wounded. The cavalrymen's effectiveness was once again reduced by the loss of horses and the shortage of provisions, and they were forced to return to Fort Bayard. Meanwhile, Victorio seemed to vanish into thin air once again, leaving a trail of dead ranchers and settlers in his path, which

seemed to be heading back to the Warm Springs Reservation.

Over the months, news of Victorio's exploits naturally made its way back to the *Mimbres* at the Warm Springs Reservation. The warriors who had stayed behind no doubt thought of the glory they were missing. Approximately 60 braves were known to have left at various intervals to join up with Victorio, but most of the warriors, including the remaining chiefs, stayed on the reservation and tried to keep the young braves there. However, government officials widely suspected Victorio was getting not only substantial reinforcements but also clandestine materiel help from the reservation. The answer, it seemed, was to confiscate all of the remaining weapons and horses on the *Mimbres* reservation to prevent Victorio and his followers from eventually using them. Without weapons or horses, it was reasoned, it would be impossible for braves to join Victorio to aid him with substantial logistics. Such a move would help calm the panicked civilian populace and help identify hostile Apache. Those who were armed could be assumed hostile and thus a legitimate target. To disarm the *Mimbres* at the reservation, General Philip Sheridan ordered the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments to converge there on 12 April in an overwhelming show of force.

The 10th Cavalry Joins the Search

The 10th US Cavalry was organized at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1866, but this process proved more difficult than that of its sister regiment. Colonel Benjamin Grierson, a cavalry officer made famous during the Civil War, set very high standards for potential recruits, which slowed the process tremendously. As a result, the completion of the organization of eight companies took slightly over a year. In 1880, the 10th Cavalry had approximately 550 effectives.³⁰

Finding suitable recruits was not the only difficulty. The racism so common to the era was a major obstacle. Whereas its remote locations rather insulated the 9th Cavalry from institutional hostility, the 10th Cavalry's organization at Fort Leavenworth placed it in a very hostile environment. As the headquarters and bustling logistics center for the Army in the West, the post afforded no opportunity to insulate the new "colored" regiment from the prejudices of the day. The fort's commander, Brevet Major General William Hoffman, was openly opposed to racially integrating the Regular Army, and he made life as difficult as he could on the new troops. Many officers and men of the post assisted him in that endeavor. Grierson eventually gained permission to transfer the 10th Cavalry to Fort Riley, Kansas, and in the summer of 1866 the final four companies joined the regiment.



Figure 5. Benjamin H. Grierson, 10th US Cavalry.

The 10th Cavalry served in Kansas and Oklahoma for the next eight years, guarding workers building the Kansas and Pacific Railroad; erecting telegraph lines; and constructing Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Throughout these years, the regiment constantly patrolled the local reservations to keep the renegades in place. The 10th Cavalry performed well during General William T. Sherman's winter campaigns against the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Comanches in 1867 and 1868. Most of the regiment was moved to Fort Concho, Texas, in 1875 to protect mail and travel routes, monitor and control the Indian reservations, and protect the settlers from outlaws. One company of the 10th Cavalry was sent to Fort Davis, Texas, which had been occupied by elements of the 9th Cavalry in 1866 before their reassignment to New Mexico in 1875. The arduous duty on the frontier produced tough soldiers who became accustomed to surviving in an area that offered few comforts and no luxuries.³¹

When orders were received in January 1880 to move his regiment from Texas to Warm Springs, New Mexico, Grierson assembled five cavalry companies and designated a small detachment of the 25th Infantry Regiment attached to his command to guard his supply train. These companies departed Fort Davis and had brushes with small bands of Apache along the entire route. As the 10th Cavalry approached from the east, the 9th Cavalry closed in on the unsuspecting *Mimbres* reservation from the west. The 9th Cavalry had a detachment of Pueblo Indian scouts under the command of Lieutenant Samuel L. Woodward serving as the regiment's eyes and ears. The goal was to quickly disarm the reservation Indians and confiscate their horses to deprive Victorio of materiel support.

Reconnoitering by Indian scouts revealed Victorio was holed up in Hembrillo Canyon. Colonel Hatch decided to divert his 9th Cavalry Regiment from the *Mimbres* reservation trail toward that spot. To prepare for battle, Major Morrow's command—consisting of three companies totaling 75 men, a detachment from the 25th Infantry, and a few San Carlos Indian scouts—was quickly brought up to Palomas and refitted with new boots, uniforms, and provisions. Captain C.B. McClellan of the 6th Cavalry, with 85 men and 40 Indian scouts, joined with Morrow to form the main assault force to attack Victorio's camp, scheduled for 8 April. Captain Hooker's force—consisting of three cavalry companies, 20 men from the 15th Infantry, and some Navaho scouts—was sent to swing around to the east side of the range to cut off any escape from that quarter. Captain Carroll, with four companies totaling about 100 men, was to advance up the Hembrillo Canyon in support.³²

The plan was a good one and might have worked, but fate threw the precise timing off. Unknown to Captain Carroll, the main assault force under Major Morrow was delayed by the need to search for water after reaching a well he counted on and finding the water pump unusable. The assault force would not reach its position in time. As for Carroll's command, it had found a source of water that, unknown to the men, had a high alkaline content that caused severe nausea and diarrhea for humans and animals alike. Captain Carroll and his command were searching for a good source of water too but proceeded with the operation as planned. Unaware of Morrow's delay, Carroll and his men pushed up the canyon on 8 April and were promptly ambushed by Victorio's braves who used the rugged terrain to their best advantage and nearly surrounded the troops. Upon hearing the heavy firing, Captain McClellan hurried his troops forward, apparently surprising the Apache, and relieved pressure on the beleaguered cavalrymen. Victorio and his band scattered and vanished among the rocks.

Claims of the number of Apache killed varied, but only one body was found. McClellan reported that the hostiles had retreated toward the *Mimbres* reservation, further strengthening the belief that support was coming from there. Colonel Hatch arrived the following day with Morrow's battalion, assumed command of the assembled forces, and proceeded on to the *Mimbres* reservation. In his haste to ride to the sound of gunfire, Hatch missed an opportunity to capture Victorio and his band, which had just scampered off the trail as the column of cavalry galloped by.³³

The convergence of the cavalry regiments at the *Mimbres* reservation at Warm Springs now continued according to the original plan. Despite the brief encounter at Hembrillo Canyon, the separate units converged within an hour or so of each other. Approximately 1,000 soldiers suddenly appearing on the scene had the desired effect of an overwhelming show of force. But the 400 or so *Mimbres* present, mostly women and children, scattered to the winds, believing the soldiers were there to move them to another reservation. Agent Russell was surprised as well, not having been informed of the plan to disarm the Apache at the reservation and confiscate their horses. He pleaded with Hatch and Grierson to be allowed to assure the *Mimbres* that the horses and weapons would be returned once peace was restored. Hatch agreed, but Grierson did not feel such leniency was wise. It was clear to him that the reservation at Warm Springs had become essentially a recruiting and supply base for Victorio. With the Department of the Interior feeding and housing the women, children, and elderly, the braves were thus free to leave to join Victorio.

When the task of collecting weapons finally commenced on 16 April, there were 65 adult males on the reservation; the rest were either in hiding or with Victorio. Agent Russell accompanied the soldiers to each encampment within the reservation, assuring each one the weapons and animals would be returned. Nautzila, the principal remaining chief, also went among his people and encouraged them to remain on the reservation. The effects of Russell and Nautzila's combined efforts were mixed. Despite their assurances, more than 300 Apache soon fled the reservation. In one instance, 30 armed and mounted *Mimbres*, along with women and children, were spotted ascending into the mountains beyond the reservation. They were now fair game for the troops. The soldiers formed a line and held their fire until the faster, unladed warriors advanced clear of the women and children before firing. Fourteen warriors were killed, and the rest kept running. About 250 Apache were soon rounded up and returned to the reservation as prisoners. They were initially held in the agency corral under abysmal conditions. Conditions gradually improved, but it was

not until nearly seven months later that their full freedoms were restored. More than 200 horses were taken and removed to Fort Stanton. Of these, all but 42 later died or were confiscated by the Army and surrounding citizens.³⁴

The Tide Starts to Turn

After the fight at Hembillo Canyon, Victorio and his band headed not for the *Mimbres* reservation but once again for the sanctuary of Mexico. He remained undetected until 13 May when a lone citizen gave warning that Victorio's band was spotted and was about to attack the settlement next to Old Fort Tularosa. A detachment of 25 troops under Sergeant George Jordan was at the nearby Barlow and Sanders Stage Station, and saddled up to intercept Victorio. Arriving at the old fort, Jordan found that Victorio had not yet attacked and put his troopers to work on erecting defenses and protecting the local populace. Victorio did indeed arrive on 14 May and launched an attack at dusk. The attack was stopped by heavy fire, and a subsequent attack fared no better. This was enough for the Apache chief, who turned southwest toward the border. For his action that day Sergeant Jordan was awarded the Medal of Honor. The troops were indeed fortunate, suffering only a few casualties.³⁵

Local volunteer citizens formed posses to hunt down the Apache but failed to find signs of them or were ambushed when they did. Although instances of raiding, murder, and destruction continued, Army scouts did not find Victorio's camps again until 23 May when one was spotted in the Black Range near the head of the Palamosa River at Cañada Alamosa. Traveling light and fast with pack mules, Captain H.K. Parker sent his Apache scouts to circle around Victorio's camp, aiming to block any routes of escape. Meanwhile, Parker dismounted his 60 cavalrymen about 300 yards away and crept up on the sleeping Apache throughout the night. By daybreak he was within 50 yards of the hostile camp, which had but 30 warriors. As prearranged, the scouts then opened up on the *Mimbres* camp, and Parker's men joined in.

The fight that was suddenly upon Victorio's men initially stunned them, but they reacted quickly. The women deliberately exposed themselves to draw fire away from the warriors who quickly sought cover and began returning fire. The exchange of gunfire lasted most of the day before the lack of water compelled Captain Parker to withdraw his forces. He was able to extract his men and 74 captured horses. Parker estimated that he killed about 30 men, women, and children, but there was no way to verify that claim. What was clear was that Victorio was badly surprised and suf-

fered losses of both people and horses. Victorio almost paid for this with his life, being wounded in the fighting, but his enemies did not know this. The eager press seized on Parker's victory, the first good news in months.

Victorio received another blow when Major Morrow's command took up the pursuit as Parker's force recuperated. It caught up with Victorio's exhausted rear guard on 30 May, killing three warriors and wounding several more. The pursuit ended when the *Mimbres* crossed the border into Mexico where the American forces were forbidden to follow. Six days later Morrow's men intercepted a small party making its separate way into Mexico. Two hostiles were killed and three wounded. This marked the 9th Cavalry's last major engagement against Victorio. It spent the rest of the campaign blocking its sector of the border and patrolling the area around the *Mimbres* reservation, attempting to deprive Victorio of support.³⁶

This particular phase of the campaign was as frustrating as any other, but it was not a failure. Although Victorio's raids had killed a number of civilians and caused extensive losses, the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments' combined efforts had forced him to seek safety in Mexico. Victorio was also down to fewer than 200 braves and had lost a large number of his animals.³⁷

After the *Mimbres* reservation affair Colonel Grierson withdrew his 10th Cavalry from New Mexico, believing Victorio would conduct raids into his district of southwestern Texas. Grierson came to this assessment by noting the increased level of Indian incidents in that area and reports that Victorio was luring recruits from that area. This tactical assessment of Victorio's intentions was strengthened by an incident on 12 May, when eight *Mimbres* Apache attacked a wagon train. Captain Carpenter's Company H pursued the band to the Rio Grande, believing it was on its way to join Victorio just across the border. Grierson also changed the strategy of pursuit, the only decisive result of which had been worn-out men and horses. Instead of chasing the elusive Apache across the desolate terrain Grierson posted detachments at watering holes and mountain passes that Victorio was bound to use. The infantry detachments in his district were organized to protect the wagon and pack trains shuttling supplies from the district headquarters at Fort Concho to Fort Davis and to the cavalry columns lacing the deserts to the west.

Victorio had indeed crossed into Mexico, shaking off the pursuit of American forces that could not cross the border. There he rested and received more recruits. By the end of July he was ready to cross back into the United States, and this time his target was Texas. Now, however, the

southwestern United States was mobilized and looking for any sign of the return of the dreaded Apache. The 9th and 10th Cavalry were deployed across the border monitoring likely crossing sites. Texas Rangers, militia units, and citizen posses were also vigilant.

South of the border, Colonel Valle sent word in late July to Colonel Grierson that his force of 400 Mexican troops was pursuing Victorio. In a rare instance of border violations by Mexican forces, Valle's men crossed the Rio Grande in hot pursuit but stopped after a few miles, being completely out of provisions and exhausted. Grierson sent supplies in reply to an appeal for help but feared that Victorio may have eluded Valle and cut back into Mexico. Grierson was correct. Entering the United States, Victorio and his 200 remaining warriors encountered gunfire wherever they went. Although able to elude each group of pursuers, the *Mimbres* band was taking casualties, and its supply of ammunition and horses was becoming increasingly uncertain. Victorio returned to Mexico on 31 July only to head north again four days later.³⁸

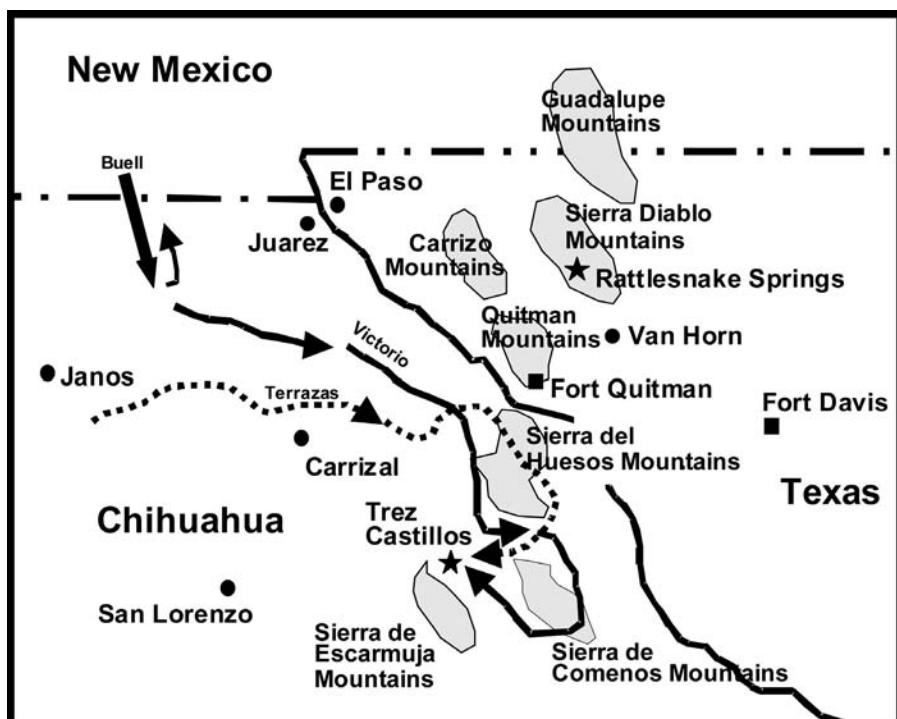
Colonel Grierson surmised that Victorio meant to reenter the United States once more and probably head straight for the Mescalero country of southern New Mexico in search of supplies and new recruits. To block Victorio Grierson concentrated eight troops of the 10th Cavalry at Fort Davis and went there himself. Also at his command were the four companies of the 24th Infantry under Lieutenant John E. Yard already stationed at Davis, a troop of the 8th Cavalry, and a detachment of Pueblo scouts recruited at the old Indian towns of Socorro and Ysleta, near El Paso. Captain Baylor's Texas Rangers, based at Ysleta, stood ready to help. Grierson also strengthened the subposts along the Rio Grande at Viejo Pass, Eagle Springs, and old Fort Quitman, abandoned as a permanent post three years earlier. Yet, concentrating combat power was not enough; it was critical to determine Victorio's location to apply it.

The Fights at *Tinaja de Las Palmas* and Eagle Springs

On 28 July Grierson learned from his scouts, who had crossed the border into Mexico and spoken with Colonel Valle, that Victorio was indeed headed north toward the Rio Grande. The companies and detachments from the various posts were ordered to converge at a water hole known as *Tinaja de Las Palmas*. When the telegraph lines went dead, Colonel Grierson rode east from Fort Quitman the next day to personally assemble his command. He took only eight men as an escort through this dangerous region. This little band crossed the Quitman Mountains and dropped into Quitman Canyon as a courier from Captain John C. Gilmore, commanding

at Eagle Springs, rode up with word that Victorio was in the immediate area with 150 warriors. Knowing the area well, Grierson knew Victorio would have to stop for water at *Tinaja de Las Palmas*, which was presently unguarded because it held water only after a rain and thus was generally an unreliable water source. This assessment was strengthened when a lone Apache was spotted reconnoitering in the area.³⁹

Colonel Grierson's detachment reached *Tinaja de Las Palmas* at the foot of Rocky Ridge and entrenched just short of the crest, naming the two tiny forts "Beck" and "Grierson." Stagecoaches passing in the night were stopped, and the drivers were instructed to take word to the subposts at Eagle Springs and Quitman to send reinforcements at once. Captain Gilmore sent Lieutenant Leighton Finley and 15 cavalrymen to escort the colonel to Eagle Springs, and they reached Grierson by 0400. But the colonel had wanted reinforcements, not an escort, and sent two riders at a gallop to bring up whatever forces they could find. Finley's men constructed another fortification on the lower ridge of the knoll among the rocks. Just 23 men were available to hold these three rock redoubts guarding the water



Map 3. Area of operations of the 10th US Cavalry Regiment.

hole. At 0730 Pueblo Indian scouts reported that Victorio was camped in a canyon only 10 miles to the south and was preparing to move. Time was running out for Grierson and his small band of Buffalo Soldiers.

At 0900, 30 July the weary Apache approached the water hole and quickly spotted the blue-clad troops. Victorio sent his men to the east to bypass this position, but Grierson would not allow him to get away that easily and ordered Lieutenant Finley to charge forward with 10 men. These soldiers were caught in a classic ambush as they learned Victorio had deliberately exposed part of his force as bait to lure his foe into a killing zone. Finley's force was out of range of support from the small forts and was on its own. The Apache took cover among the rocks and returned fire in a skirmish that lasted more than an hour, during which the soldiers were in grave danger of being encircled and annihilated in their advanced position. Desperate, Finley ordered a charge to break the Apache siege. Hearing the sound of battle in the mountains, Captain Viele, with Companies C and G, charged down the road from Eagle Springs and joined the battle at this critical time. However, in the smoke and dust of battle, the charging troopers initially mistook Finley's detachment for hostiles and opened fire, forcing a confused withdrawal from its advanced position back to Grierson's troops covering the water hole. Luckily the "friendly" fire caused no casualties among the cavalrymen. Taking advantage of the confusion, Victorio ordered a counterattack, apparently believing there were but a few soldiers. The screaming Apache rose up and rushed forward.

Private Samuel Prescott's horse was shot out from under him, and he faced a literal race for his life. Sprinting after his hard-riding comrades, he stopped briefly to empty his revolver in the direction of his pursuers, which caused them to pause just long enough for him to effect his escape by reaching the protective fire of the soldiers on the ridge. Also, once deprived of their cover, Victorio's men were easy targets. "We then let fly from our fortifications at the Indians about 300 yards off," wrote young Robert Grierson in his diary, "and golly you ought to've seen 'em turn tail and strike for the hills. If this one man had only got back with the rest we could have waited till the Indians got very close to us before firing. . . . As it was the sons of guns nearly jumped out of their skins getting away." The reprieve was short though as Victorio's braves regrouped and renewed the battle. It took another hour, but Captain Viele finally fought his way through to Colonel Grierson. Seeking to avoid battle against diminishing odds, Victorio again tried to bypass the cavalrymen and head north, but Grierson ordered another detachment forward that cut off the warriors and forced them to turn back.⁴⁰

The odds against Victorio further tipped with the sudden arrival of Company A under the command of Captain Nicholas Nolan, who had ridden hard from Fort Quitman. By 1230 the outnumbered *Mimbres* broke contact and scattered south toward the Rio Grande and Mexico. The cavalry's losses were surprisingly light, with only one man killed and Lieutenant R.S. Colladay wounded in the four-hour fight. From Victorio's force of about 100 braves, approximately seven men were killed and a large number wounded. This skirmish forced Victorio to retreat, but Colonel Grierson knew that his adversary would soon return. The cavalrymen salvaged the horse equipment from the dead animals and were back in Eagle Springs by nightfall. No one knew it at the time, but this tactical defeat meant the beginning of the end for Victorio.⁴¹

Colonel Grierson would not have to wait long for Victorio's return. The word that Victorio was in motion again arrived by message from Colonel Valle of the Mexican forces in the final week of July. Victorio's advance guard was spotted on 2 August by a detachment led by Lieutenant Henry Flipper, who then rode a hard 98 miles in 21 hours to bring this vital intelligence to his company commander, Captain Gilmore. Word was sent immediately to Grierson who ordered his scattered detachments to converge on Eagle Springs. A detachment under Corporal Asa Weaver made contact with Victorio's main force on 3 August in a surprise engagement in which the soldiers had to fight a 21-mile running rear-guard action all the way to Eagle Springs. Other patrols confirmed that Victorio and between 125 and 150 followers with many horses were headed north from the Rio Grande toward the Guadalupe Mountains. Grierson ordered his command in that direction in an attempt to block the way north into New Mexico. He hoped to establish an ambush in Bass Canyon, near the town of Van Horn, and amended his orders to his scattered companies to converge there.⁴²

On 5 August the men of the 10th Cavalry marched about 68 miles in 24 hours to arrive ahead of Victorio. The two companies with Grierson reached the canyon but discovered that Victorio had doubled back, slipping through the screen of soldiers and was then riding north on the west side of the forbidding Sierra Diablo range. Grierson raced north on the east side of the mountains, shielding his command from observation. His objective was to reach the watering hole at Rattlesnake Springs, one of but two permanent water sources in the region, before Victorio. (The other permanent water hole was located at Sulphur Springs, nearly 50 miles away.) It simply became a race to reach the vital source of water first. Interestingly, Grierson countermanded his order to leave the wagons behind and use pack mules. Instead, the cavalry would use the vehicles as far as possible.

After traversing the desert and mountains for days, cavalrymen and their mounts were worn down, but Grierson and the advance elements of the 10th Cavalry marched another 65 miles in under 21 hours and reached Rattlesnake Springs, arriving just ahead of Victorio. This rapid advance was made possible in great part by the large quantities of forage and water carried in the wagons, a rare example of the use of wagons actually speeding an advance. After posting his men in the rocks to cover the water source, Grierson awaited reinforcements. Soon Captain Carpenter and two more companies joined him and were posted a short distance south of the spring in support.

At 1400 on 6 August the Apache slowly made their way down Rattlesnake Canyon toward the spring, unaware of the ambush laid for them. They, too, had ridden hard, and both Apache and horses needed water. Victorio was tactically off balance and apparently did not have an advance guard. Just seconds before the signal was given to the cavalrymen to commence fire, Victorio sensed danger and halted his men. With hostiles who were about to bolt in their sights, the troops did not wait; they opened fire on their own initiative, and under a hail of lead, Victorio's men scattered and withdrew out of range.

But Victorio's people needed water and, believing there were only a few soldiers present, regrouped and attacked immediately. However, Companies B and H were in an overwatch position covering the water, and a few massed volleys from their carbines sent the hostiles scattering back into the canyon. Stunned by the presence of such a strong force but in desperate need of water, Victorio repeatedly charged the cavalrymen in attempts to reach the spring. The last such attempt was conducted near nightfall and, when it failed, Victorio and his followers withdrew into the mountains with the cavalrymen in furious pursuit. Darkness finally halted Grierson's troops.⁴³

Victorio gathered his people in the mountains west of the spring. In the light of a new day, to the southeast and about 8 miles distant, a string of wagons was seen rounding a mountain spur and crawling onto the plain. It was a load of provisions from Fort Davis, guarded by Captain Gilmore and his company of infantry. A band of warriors rode out of the mountains and attacked savagely but were met with a destructive volley. Colonel Grierson sent a company under Captain Carpenter to assist and strike the attackers in the rear. The Apache attack disintegrated as the warriors fled in confusion to the southwest to rejoin Victorio's main force as it moved deeper into the Carrizo Mountains.

Victorio suffered setbacks elsewhere, too. Captain Lebo with Troop K belatedly reached Rattlesnake Springs on 7 August. On the way he had cut off a band of Mescaleros from the Guadalupe Mountains riding to join Victorio, forcing them back to the north. Three companies under Captain Carpenter's command were dispatched to Sulfur Springs to guard the water there. Captain Baylor and 15 Texas Rangers joined Carpenter's force on 8 August and joined in the hunt.⁴⁴

Victorio's band felt a major blow when its supply camp atop the Sierra Diablo was discovered on 9 August. Attacked by cavalrymen and Rangers, the guards fled, leaving 25 head of cattle, provisions, and some pack animals. Victorio was now critically short of food and water and facing increasing numbers of soldiers, Rangers, and armed citizens. His people were hardy but not indestructible. With resupply uncertain and faced by such strength, Victorio slipped his band back across the border into Mexico to avoid pursuit. His people had more than 30 braves killed and 50 wounded, and those remaining were mostly on foot and weak.

Victorio was substantially weakened, and Grierson now had most of his command assembled. Giving his enemy no rest, Grierson organized his force into three squadrons of two companies each and sent them to comb the mountains for a sign of the hostiles. He also maintained guards on all the known water sources. Carpenter and Nolan picked up the trail on 11 August, but their horses were too tired and thirsty for rapid pursuit. Nolan's men reached the Rio Grande on 13 August. There the Indian scouts reported that Victorio had crossed only the night before, but it was apparent that the number of wounded and his broken-down stock were slowing his pace. This trail was to be the last evidence seen of Victorio in the United States.

However, Victorio was still on the loose, and no one could guess when he would return. What everyone knew was that the raids and killing would continue as long as he lived. To underscore that point, Victorio gave a parting salute as his party fled west into the Carrizo Mountains and on to Mexico. Passing again through Quitman Canyon the Apache ambushed a stagecoach and killed the driver and passenger J.J. Byrne, a Union general in the Civil War who had also been a US Marshal in Galveston. At the time of his death, Byrne was employed as a surveyor for the Texas and Pacific Railroad. The bullet struck him in the thigh, reported Ranger Captain Baylor, "within an inch of the wound he received at Gettysburg." J.J. Byrne bled to death from his wound.⁴⁵

Worn down by the arduous campaign, Grierson's 10th Cavalry was

posted in static positions along the Rio Grande to rest but also to be in position to stop Victorio from returning to Texas. Colonel Grierson had not destroyed Victorio, but he had outmaneuvered the greatest of the Apache chiefs and had prevented him from going where he had planned to go. Few commanders on the western frontier could make a similar claim.

Victorio and his band crossed the border, but the Mexican forces avoided a decisive battle with them and, in effect, allowed them safe passage. The Apache chief was soon in the Candileria Mountains, nearly 60 miles from old Fort Quitman. These rugged mountains were safe, but this isolated range was devoid of game and could not support his people for long. Effectively blocked from returning to New Mexico, Victorio would lead his people southeast and deeper into Mexico.

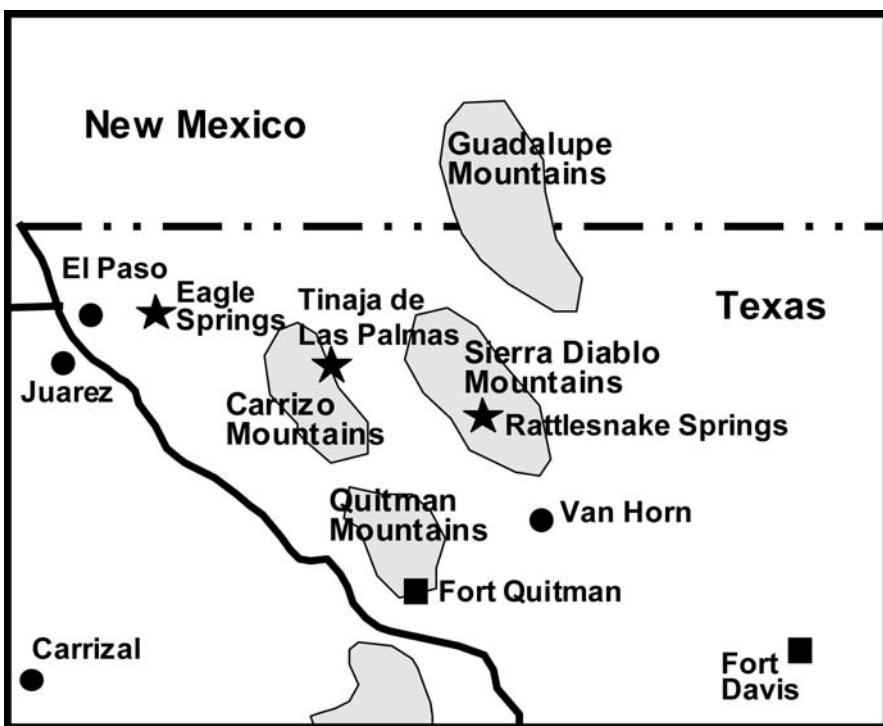
The Last Weeks of Victorio

At this very late stage, the Mexican and American governments finally began to cooperate to trap and destroy Victorio's band. A powerful force assembled under Colonels George Buell and Eugene Carr was given permission to cross into Mexico, and by September this operation was put into motion. Captain Baylor with 12 of his Texas Rangers and almost 100 civilian volunteers also supported the cross-border operation. Although the spirit of cooperation between the two governments was high, it was short-lived. On 9 October Colonel Joaquín Terrazas of the Mexican forces requested that all American forces withdraw beyond the border, citing they were no longer needed. It seemed obvious to the American officers that Terrazas felt he had the situation in hand and did not wish to share the glory. It turned out to be a fairly accurate assessment. Although the American officers protested, they complied with the request and subsequent orders from Washington by trekking north. For the Americans, the campaign against Victorio was over.⁴⁶

The Mexican forces in pursuit were under the sole command of Colonel Terrazas, principally because Colonel Valles' force of about 400 men had just returned from a long campaign and required time to rest and refit. Terrazas had spent the month of September scouting through the mountains of Chihuahua searching for signs of Victorio and gathering men and weapons from the reluctant and unenthusiastic citizens. When he sent word to the Americans to return home, he had more than 350 men under arms with ample supplies and ammunition and was confident he had enough force to deal with the renegade Apache chieftain.

Victorio's braves, women, and children had spent more than a year on the run, and the harsh conditions and deprivation were telling. The con-

stant skirmishing with the American Army and Mexican forces had worn down the people and animals. The resistance they were now encountering was more organized and heavily armed. For reasons known only to Victorio, once he was in Mexico, he turned his people to the southeast to a mountain range known as *Tres Castillos* (Three Peaks). These mountains were not particularly imposing and were essentially no more than three mounds of rock in a vast open desert. There was little water, sparse grass for the animals, and no means of escape except by crossing the open desert once again. The mountains here would not be a place of refuge but a final trap.



Map 4. Victorio's path to *Tres Castillos*.

The trails leading to the camp were unmistakable, and Tarahumari Indian scouts quickly found its location and reported to General Terrazas. Terrazas quickly converged his 350 men on that location and surrounded Victorio on one of the mountain peaks on 14 October. For 24 hours the adversaries waged a bitter and bloody battle among the rocks. This time the Mexican numbers and firepower were decisive. Toward the end, the Apache were almost out of ammunition and were reduced to throwing

stones. When the fight was finally over, Victorio and 86 warriors were dead, and 89 women and children were taken captive. They were held in Chihuahua City for the next several years. Only a handful of warriors escaped. A Tarahumari sharpshooter felled Victorio with a miraculously long shot, although Apache legend persists that “Old Vic” took his own life with his knife to prevent being captured.⁴⁷

The few who escaped, including aged Apache medicine man Nana, joined another renegade, Geronimo, in the Sierra Madre to the west and carried on the traditions of Victorio. In January 1881 they stopped a stagecoach in Quitman Canyon and killed the occupants. Baylor’s Texas Rangers took the trail that twisted and turned through mountain and desert. Reinforced, the Rangers surprised the Apache camp high in the Sierra Diablo on 29 January. Four warriors, two women, and two children fell in the first volley, and the rest scattered and eventually made their way back to the reservations in New Mexico and Arizona.

Victorio’s demise had caused a grievous blow to the *Mimbres* Apaches’ resistance. The number in any given raider band became generally no more than 10 warriors and up to 30 being the rare exception. Forays from notable Apaches, such as Nana and Geronimo, were brief and were simply small affairs when compared to the size of Victorio’s force and the destruction it caused. By 1886 even these Apache were finally and officially pacified, and peace came to the Southwest.

The Final Analysis

The Victorio Campaign illustrates how a small band of dedicated and hardy people can fight for an extensive time against an overwhelming force. By knowing the terrain intimately Victorio usually was one step ahead of his pursuers, savagely striking at will and disappearing as a phantom into the mountains. Although his people could endure extreme hardship, he provided them with food and knew where the few sources of water were. He was in many ways an asymmetric fighter. He and his band were highly adaptive and organized on the basis of an idea alone, that being maintaining the old Apache way of life. This coupled with a far different set of values and motivations exposed little for the US Army to target and neutralize except by overwhelming force over a long period of time.

Victorio and his supporters maintained that, had the *Mimbres* Apache been allowed to stay at the reservation of their choice, they would have been peaceful and content. That may or may not have been true, but the issue became irrelevant on the initiation of their final departure from the reservation. They were convinced there could be no peace with the Ameri-

can government, and after a series of murders and stealing, they were absolutely correct. The public would not tolerate their simple return to the reservation to take up the plow. This left but two outcomes for Victorio: victory or death. The inexorable flow of Western civilization across the frontier guaranteed the final outcome. The Apache would adapt to the reservation, or they would die trying to maintain their old way of life.

Once off the reservation, the renegade Apache became the US Army's problem. Undermanned and tasked to secure a vast frontier, the Army faced enormous challenges. Events showed the officers and men were up to the challenge, but they were armed with mediocre weapons, and the clothing and equipment were most often unsuited for the environment in which they fought. Logistics, too, was a constant struggle, hampered by a lack of infrastructure and supply trains that faced interdiction over the long distances through hostile territory.

Unfortunately for Victorio he faced two commanders who had adapted well to the situation in the West and made the best use of what was on hand. Colonels Edwin Hatch and Benjamin Grierson were both veterans of the Civil War and had commanded their regiments on the plains for almost 15 years. They had come to know their men and the terrain in which they were to fight. They both used Indian scouts extensively and employed the more nimble mule trains when possible.

There are four key elements that brought about the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments' defeat of Victorio. The first key element was using Indian scouts as trackers and guides. The Indian scouts reliably identified Victorio's whereabouts and predicted his intentions. They were also able to penetrate into Mexico and gather intelligence almost at will, and if caught by authorities, the US government could easily disavow them. Without the Indian scouts the cavalry would have been limited to pursuit operations against a foe that could afford to drive its animals to death, then simply steal more and continue on.

The second key element was Colonel Grierson's decision to forego pursuit operations and to place guarding forces to cover the few sources of water in his department. This new tactic forced Victorio to come to a location where the cavalrymen would enjoy the advantages of defending among the rocks. Deprived of water and lacking the firepower to take it, Victorio was forced to withdraw in an increasingly desperate search for it. In the end it seemed as though Grierson was one step ahead of his wily adversary. Given Grierson's control over the available water sources, Victorio had few choices. Faced by a strong cavalry screen and short on

water, he returned to Mexico to meet his fate a few weeks later. Although the Mexicans claimed the credit for finally ending Victorio's reign of terror, it was the US Army's efforts that weakened him to the point that it was possible to do so.

Separating Victorio's band from the support it received from the reservation at Warm Springs was the third key element. Although the cavalry used heavy-handed methods, disarming the reservation Indians and confiscating their horses severely curtailed the potential support Victorio could receive from that quarter.

The fourth key element in defeating Victorio was Colonel Grierson's determination to relentlessly seek battle with Victorio's band. Constantly on the run, the Apache found it increasingly difficult to rest and regroup. This strategy required Grierson to keep his men in the field, and the cost in supplies and horses was immense. He also had to contend with an increasingly frustrated public and the press. However, over time, patience and arduous efforts wore Victorio's band down to a point at which it fled to the safety of Mexico.

The lessons of the Victorio Campaign are as relevant today as they were in the 19th century. Commanders must understand the enemy's doctrine and exploit its weaknesses as Colonel Grierson did by abandoning pursuit operations and depriving Victorio of essential water. Commanders and staffs must also look beyond their formal training in devising flexible tactics and strategy, and preparing their units for sustained operations that could last for months. This work is intended as a historical example of a successful campaign against an evasive fugitive and his band of supporters.

Directly correlating Victorio's story to modern operations shows that commanders and staffs must identify and exploit key weaknesses in their enemies just like Colonel Grierson did. In the case of modern terrorist organizations, depriving them of sanctuary and logistics, denying international borders to shield their activities, and neutralizing or isolating popular support are axioms. Applying unrelenting pressure on terrorist organizations keeps them constantly on the run, weakens them by attrition, and prevents them from establishing secure bases and logistics support. Other avenues through which to bring international terrorists to bay may include intercepting signals, penetrating the organizations through human intelligence sources, and using indigenous and coalition forces. By following these tenets, so aptly illustrated by the persistent cavalrymen in the Victorio Campaign, elusive enemies can be tracked, worn down, and

defeated. Open press reports indicate that many of these tenets are being used against bin Laden and his terrorist organization. The campaign also illustrates that commanders must seek out and neutralize a key weakness in their elusive enemies. For Victorio it was the sources of water in an arid land. By physically occupying these sites the cavalrymen forced the Apache to come to them. Victorio's edge in mobility was neutralized, and the fruitless pursuit operations ended. The cavalrymen fighting Victorio showed a tactical agility, including the ability to reach beyond the capabilities normally assigned to them. Today's Army continues this tradition in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Notes

1. Joseph A. Stout, Jr., *Apache Lightning: The Last Great Battles of the Ojo Calientes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 4. American Indian tribes were exceptionally diverse in customs that reflected the region in which they lived. The Apache was perhaps the extreme of the warrior culture.
2. Particularly while on the warpath, the Apache would pay little heed to the needs of their animals, reasoning that if they broke down they would be the next meal. Besides, the next target would provide replacements.
3. Stout, 14-16.
4. C.L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apache* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 147; Stout, 31. Army officers were assigned as Indian agents in an attempt to end bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption. Banning this practice in 1870 returned these men to their regiments that sorely needed experienced leaders. It also removed these gentlemen from what was considered an unseemly assignment and removed all temptations to become caught up in various illegal activities that plagued the system.
5. Sonnichsen, 142; Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1998), 58.
6. Ibid., 58-59. Cavalry companies were authorized 100 men at this time, but losses due to disease, casualties, and desertions thinned the ranks. As stated before, recruits were generally hard to get. The organizational term cavalry “troop” was not in use at this time; the term “company” is used throughout this work.
7. Ibid., 59-60.
8. Ibid., 61-63. The US Infantry and Cavalry School was not yet established at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. That would occur in 1881.
9. Ibid., 73.
10. Wilbur D. Jones, *Arming the Eagle: A History of the United States Weapons Acquisition Since 1775* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Systems Management College Press, 1999), 164.
11. Stout, 34. George Crook was born on 8 September 1828 near Dayton, Ohio. He graduated from West Point in 1852 and saw duty in the Pacific Northwest. During the Civil War he was colonel of the 36th Ohio, appointed brigadier general of volunteers, and commanded a brigade in Virginia. He commanded a cavalry division in the Army of the Cumberland in the Chickamauga campaign. Crook received a brevet promotion to major general in 1864 and commanded a corps in the Shenandoah Valley campaign. He was captured in Cumberland, Maryland, and was exchanged in March 1865. Crook finished the war in command of a cavalry division in the Appomattox campaign. Although he did not invent the idea of using Indian scouts, he made full use of them. After the campaign,

the Apache scouts started wearing red headbands for identification. By 1886 the Indian scouts were issued regulation uniforms with distinctive insignia. George Crook died on 21 March 1890 in Chicago. See also Douglas C. McChristian, "Pueblo Scouts in the Victorio Campaign," *The Military Frontier, A Symposium to Honor Don Russell*, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, 2-4 May 1986. Copy held at Fort Davis National Historic Site. McChristian is a historian with the National Park Service and former superintendent of the Fort Davis National Historical Site.

12. William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 19-21.
13. James A. Sawicki, *Cavalry Regiments of the US Army* (Dumphries, VA: Wyvern Publications, 1985), 169-70.
14. Colonel Edward Hatch was born on 22 December 1832, in Bangor, Maine, and was a lumber dealer and a seaman before the Civil War. He entered the service as a captain in the 2d Iowa Cavalry in August 1861 and was a colonel eight months later. Fighting at the Island No. 10 siege and later at the battle of Corinth, Hatch participated in Grierson's raid in June 1863. He raided into northern Alabama and Tennessee and was brevetted to brigadier general in April 1864 and given command of a cavalry division in time to fight against Hood in the Franklin and Nashville campaign. After the war Hatch was sent west and brevetted to major general in 1867. Hatch was the colonel of the 9th Cavalry from its organization until his retirement. He died on 11 April 1889 at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.
15. Stout, 76-77. Victorio was known by many names in his life, including Victoria, Vitoria, Vittorio, Beduiat, Bidu-ya, Lucero, "Light," and Laceres. His sister was the famous female warrior, Lozen. Members of the tribe were fanatically loyal to him and allegedly threatened to save Victorio from capture by killing him and eating his body.
16. Ibid., 84-85.
17. Dan L. Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apache* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1974), 219-20. This book is the definitive work on Victorio and the campaign. The actual incident that prompted Victorio to leave the reservation for what would be the final time varies with a wide number of sources. Whatever that incident was, he was not happy there, and it took little provocation.
18. Ibid., 236-37; Leckie, 210-11. A native of Ohio, Charles B. Gatewood graduated 23d in the West Point class of 1877.
19. Stout, 46, 92. Stout is unnecessarily critical of Governor Lew Wallace, charging him with having more interest in his writing pursuits than his official duties. Although a prolific writer, Wallace was not known for dereliction of duty. Incidentally, *Ben Hur* was published on 12 November 1880.
20. Ibid., 84-85, 111-12. Many Mexicans were still very bitter about the losses incurred in the Mexican War of 1846. They had no problem allowing the

Apache to simply walk away and let the US Army deal with the matter.

21. Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1974) and Robert M. Utley, *Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) are two excellent sources on the history of the Texas Rangers.

22. Marcos E. Kinevan, *Frontier Cavalryman: Lieutenant John Bigelow With the Buffalo Soldiers in Texas* (El Paso, TX: Western Texas Press, 1998), 220; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point*, vol. III (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), 287; Stout, 95-97. A native of New York, Robert Temple Emmet graduated from West Point in 1877. He had been with the regiment for two years at the time of the campaign.

23. Thrapp, 238-40. Dan L. Thrapp, *The Congressional Medal of Honor: The Names, the Deeds* (Forest Ranch, CA: Sharps and Dunnigan Publishing, 1984), 657-58, hereafter cited as *Medal*; Cullum, 293. A native of Ohio, Mathias Day graduated from West Point in 1877, placing seventh in his class. Sergeant John Denny received the Medal of Honor on 27 November 1894. See also Stout, 97-98.

24. Ibid., 63. Albert P. Morrow was generally considered an excellent officer and had entered the service as a sergeant in a Pennsylvania infantry regiment in 1861. He was transferred to the cavalry in 1862 and elected to second lieutenant. Morrow was eventually brevetted to colonel for gallantry and assigned after the war to the 6th Cavalry as a captain. He was transferred in 1867 to the 9th Cavalry as a major, where he would serve until his promotion to lieutenant colonel. He returned to the 6th Cavalry in 1882. See Cullum, 277-78. Augustus P. Blocksom of Virginia graduated 22d in the same class.

25. Thrapp, 241-42; Thrapp, *Medal*, 650-51; Stout, 99-102. He received his award on 6 January 1882.

26. Thrapp, 243-44; Stout, 100.

27. Leckie, 212; Thrapp, *Medal*, 658. The awards were presented on 2 April 1898.

28. Kinevan, 220, 222. The newspaper accounts vary widely from locality to locality and reflect the editor's opinion. Contemporary journalistic standards were low, and sensationalism was the norm. The historians at the Fort Davis Historical Site kindly provided copies of several contemporary articles.

29. Sonnichsen, 169-70; Leckie, 214.

30. Kinevan. This work presents a detailed account of the organization of the 10th US Cavalry Regiment. See also Stout, 61-62. Benjamin H. Grierson was born on 8 July 1826 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was a music teacher and storekeeper. During the Civil War he was a major in the 6th Illinois Cavalry and was later promoted to colonel. Grierson pursued the enemy cavalry after Van

Dorn's Holly Springs raid and led his own daring raid through Tennessee and Mississippi in June 1863. He was appointed to brigadier general and commanded a cavalry division in the Army of the Mississippi. He campaigned against the Indians and commanded the Department of Arizona and the Districts of New Mexico and Indian Territory. Grierson retired in 1890 and died on 1 September 1911 in Omena, Michigan.

31. Stout, 62. See also Edward L.N. Glass, *The History of the Tenth Cavalry: 1866-1921* (Fort Collins, CO: The Old Army Press, 1972), 12-23, for a detailed history of the regiment before the campaign.

32. Leckie, 215-16; Stout, 129.

33. Stout, 132. Although it may seem unusual for a water pump to be in this remote location, it was not uncommon at the time. Ranchers and stagecoach companies often installed pumps or dug wells to provide water for their animals in the deserts and mountains.

34. Sonnichsen, 182-84; Leckie, 218-19.

35. Leckie, 220-21; Thrapp, *Medal*, 672. Some can argue that the "Buffalo Soldiers" did not receive much credit for their exploits. However, of the 17 Medals of Honor awarded for action in 1879, five went to members of the 9th Cavalry. For the three awarded for 1880, one went to a soldier in this regiment. Many soldiers serving during the frontier wars did not receive pensions automatically, but service in specific regiments active in particular campaigns was a basis for qualification. The Victorio Campaign was not officially recognized until 1917.

36. Leckie, 222; Stout, 140-42.

37. Leckie, 222. Again, Victorio maintained his mobility and provisions by stealing stock from ranches or capturing it from the Army. This was a significant blow to him.

38. Report of Colonel B.H. Grierson to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, 20 September 1880, Document G, *Report of the General of the Army, Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, vol. I (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1880). A copy is held at the Fort Davis National Historic Site (National Park Service), Fort Davis, Texas. Hereafter cited as *Grierson's Report*, this text is used extensively in this work in detailing the chronology of the battles of the 10th Cavalry and Grierson's assessments and rationale.

39. Leckie, 225; Douglas C. McChristian, "Grierson's Fight at *Tinaja de Las Palmas*: An Episode in the Victorio Campaign," *Red River Valley Historical Review* (Winter 1982), 54-59. Hereafter cited as *Grierson's Fight*, this fight is also known as the Battle of Rocky Ridge.

40. Ibid, 60-61; Robert K. Grierson, *Journal Kept on the Victorio Campaign in 1880*, 24, copy held at Fort Davis National Historic Site (National Park Service), Fort Davis, Texas, and cited with permission. Hereafter cited as *Robert's Journal*, this is a very colorful account of the campaign in which the young Robert

made daily entries while accompanying his father on the campaign. Some of the minor details do not match his father's official reports, but he often adds more detail to the rather bland official documents.

41. Leckie, 225; *Grierson's Report*, paragraphs 16 to 20. See also *Grierson's Fight*, 61.

42. *Robert's Journal*, 32-34. Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper of Georgia was the first African-American graduate from West Point, ranking 50 in his class of 76. He forfeited potential greatness by trying to conceal a shortage of commissary funds at Fort Davis in 1881. Flipper was court-martialed for allegedly embezzling almost \$4,000 and making five false official statements. Although cleared of the embezzlement charge, he was convicted of making false statements and dismissed from the service on 30 June 1882 for conduct unbecoming an officer. President William J. Clinton pardoned him in 1999.

43. Thrapp, *Medal*, 653-54. Captain Louis Carpenter, one of the distinguished Indian fighters of the period, earned an outstanding record during the Civil War in which he received two brevets for gallantry at Gettysburg and one at Winchester. Carpenter was a captain and troop commander in the 10th Cavalry until 1883 and retired a brevet brigadier general in 1899. In 1898 he was awarded a Medal of Honor "for distinguished conduct during the Indian campaign in Kansas and Colorado, September and October 1868, and on the forced march Sept. 23-25, 1868, to the relief of Forsyth's scouts." Carpenter died in 1916.

44. Webb, 400. It was fortunate for Victorio that he did not attack another supply train that was in the area. It was part of Captain Livermore's company from the 8th Cavalry and was protected by an escort with a Gatling gun. Although a formidable weapon, it was never brought to bear during the campaign.

45. *Ibid.*, 401.

46. Sonnichsen, 197; Leckie, 229-30. When Colonel Buell went into Mexico, he took a 400-gallon water wagon that he invented himself. In 1997 Turner Network Television released a movie titled "Buffalo Soldiers." The end of the show depicted a scene in which the cavalrymen intentionally allowed the Apache to escape, signifying a bond between them against a white oppressor. In truth, the soldiers did their duty admirably and did not hesitate to engage the Apache. For their part, the Apache felt no kinship with the black soldiers and did their best to kill them. This was a bitter campaign, and the movie scene was pure Hollywood with a political agenda.

47. Thrapp, 301-304, is a detailed account of the final battle. Various accounts of Victorio's death were told after the fight, including one where he was mounted on a fine white horse. Victorio wore no distinctive garments and was probably identified only after the battle.

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